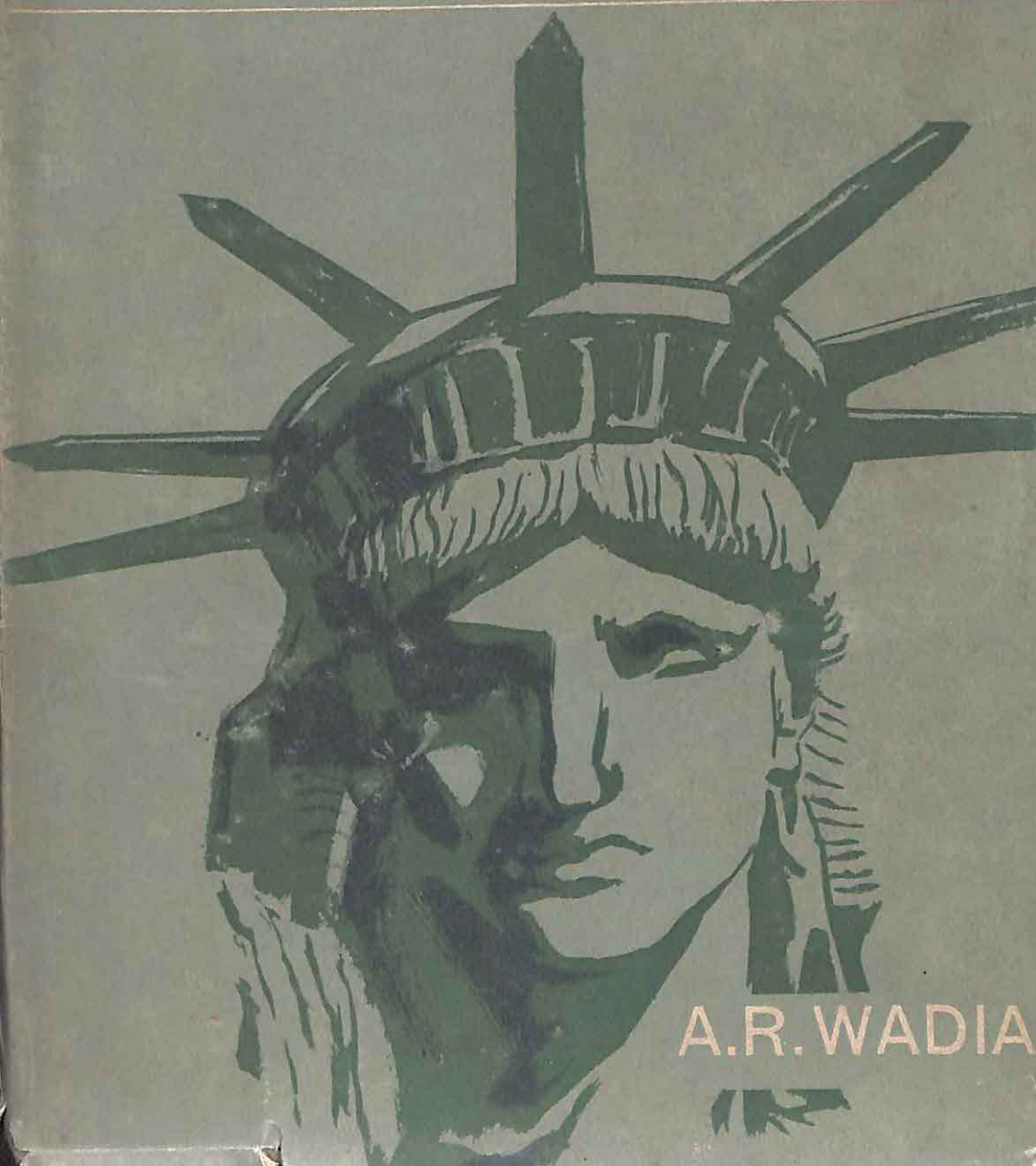


# DEMOCRACY AND SOCIETY



A.R. WADIA

The book consists of a series of lectures by the author at Annamalai University and Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan, in 1965. It is divided into two sections viz., Democracy, and State and Society.

The author discusses the different forms of democratic governments in the first section and in the second he is concerned with the type of society which could evolve as a result of democratic government whether in the Western or Russian sense. He has sought to make a comparative study of democracy in Western and Communist countries. His discussions on Democracy in India should be of particular interest to Indians.

The book lucid in thought and expression will be useful to readers in general and students of politics and sociology in particular.

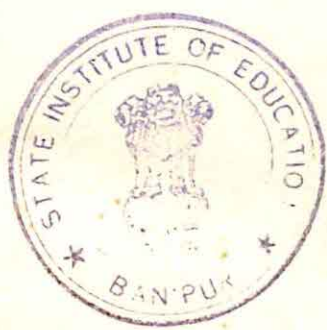
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DEMOCRACY AND SOCIETY



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*In grateful remembrance to my revered teachers*

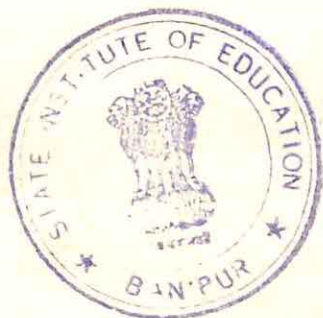
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## P R E F A C E

IN 1964 I had the honour to be invited by Annamalai University and Visva Bharati University to deliver extension lectures. I accepted the invitations and chose to speak on *Democracy* at Annamalai University and on *Society and State* at Visva Bharati University. I could not deliver the lectures at Annamalai University on 25th and 26th January 1965, as the students were on strike over the issue of Hindi as the national language of India. Later at Visva Bharati University my lectures were delivered on the 30th and 31st January and 1st February 1965.

For several months I found no time to write out my lectures. I could do so only in September and October 1965. This explains an occasional reference to events and statements made after January 1965. Each series of three lectures was more or less complete within its limits. Each had a definite standpoint of approach, but a certain amount of repetition was inevitable. Now that both the series are published together as a matter of convenience and economy, I could have avoided the repetitions, but that would have affected the unity of thought in each series. So I can but hope that these repetitions would be overlooked, especially in my treatment of the Social Contract Philosophers. The three lectures on *Society and State* have been printed in five parts, covering particular topics.

My object has been to discuss the different forms of democratic government in my lectures on *Democracy*, while in the second series I have been concerned with the

type of society which could evolve as a result of democratic government whether in the Western or Russian sense. In these lectures I have ventured to make a comparative study of democracy in Western and Communist countries. The discussion of Democracy in India should be of particular interest to Indians.

No Preface can be complete without an expression of thanks. I take this opportunity to thank the Vice-Chancellor and the Syndicate, particularly Professor R. Ramanujachari, of Annamalai University and the Vice-Chancellor, Shri C. R. Das and the Syndicate of Visva Bharati University for giving me an opportunity to put together a few thoughts on subjects of absorbing interest to Indians today.

Finally I can but hope that the lectures as published will be found useful by the public in India in general and the students in particular.

Bombay,  
18 December, 1965.

A. R. WADIA



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## PHILOSOPHY OF DEMOCRACY

IN THE POLITICAL structure of the world to-day democracy has come to dominate all political thinking. We are so used to the word *democracy* that we have a right to take for granted what it means and what it stands for. But in actual fact the concept has become very ambiguous and means different things to different men. We are accustomed to speak of the democracies of the West as opposed to the communism of Soviet Russia and of China. Yet the Communists too speak of their political organisation as democracy. If we mean by it parliamentary democracy, no communist country can claim to be democratic. But in so far as the communists speak in the name of the people there is some justification, if they claim to be democrats. This brings out the need to define democracy. A brief historical review of the concept of democracy will help us in understanding the conflicting interpretations of it at the present day.

Political organisations fall into three distinct types: monarchy or the rule of one, aristocracy or bureaucracy as the rule of the few, and democracy as the rule of the many, if not of all. Tribal organisations had a tinge of democracy, but they were so bound down by customs that they tended to be extremely conservative and the rule of the chief tended to fossilise customs. Only when the tribal community came to be settled in one definite area

that the state came into being and it became monarchic. The city states of ancient Greece have an enlightening history of their political growth. It took some centuries before people became conscious of the tyranny of kings and the selfishness of bureaucracies and thought it possible to assume political power in their own hands. So when demos or the common people did away with kings and aristocrats, democracy was born as the rule of the people. But here again it has to be borne in mind that the Greek demos comprised only the free citizens as against the vast numbers of slaves, who had no political or any other rights. From our standpoint slavery is a heinous institution, but it had its place in the evolutionary history of humanity. It arose out of wars, as capturing enemies as prisoners of war and keeping them alive was certainly more humane than the cannibalistic practice of killing and eating them. Slaves were made use of for all domestic purposes: tilling the soil, doing domestic work and if they were or could be made literate they functioned even as scribes and secretaries. The relationship between the masters and the slaves must have varied according to the temperament of the master concerned. But in fairness it must be noted that the relationship was often cordial. Slaves were looked upon as members of the family and were often granted their freedom as a reward for their faithful services. This relationship was natural because the slaves could be Greeks as wars between the city states of Greece was quite normal, especially between Athens and Sparta. The triumphs of the Greek civilisation and culture are in part due to the slaves, for their labours made it possible for their masters to devote themselves to literature and arts, philosophy and science and lastly to politics in the days of Pericles. Slavery was looked upon as a natural institution, even by such great philosophers as Plato and Aristotle. They



only protested against any Greek being made a slave, for all Greeks were fit to rule as against the rest of the world dubbed as barbarians. Even the Egyptians and Iranians were looked upon only as barbarians for unlike the Greeks they had not developed the concept of freedom. All the ancient civilisations of the world, Chinese, Indian, Egyptian, Babylonian achieved their triumphs through the labour of slaves. Greek democracy only continued this tradition and for this very reason their democracy was at bottom an aristocracy.

The Romans too started with monarchy but shifted on to democracy. But this democracy too was confined to patricians and the plebeians were left to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. As the Romans were always involved in wars there was a large number of slaves. The Romans were by temperament martial and harsh and the lot of slaves was not enviable. It led to an uprising of slaves, but there were Romans who treated slaves generously. Epictetus, a famous philosopher, was originally a slave. When the Roman Republic became huge and the tussles between leaders took the form of civil wars, the rise of a Roman Empire under Augustus became inevitable and slavery became a more confirmed institution and took a more commercial form, as human beings from the ends of the empire and even beyond came to be bought and sold in the open market and male sinews and female beauty determined their price.

There could be no liberty in an empire and even after the downfall of the Roman Empire the kingdoms that arose were monarchical and feudal in character. Neither monarchy nor feudalism had anything to do with democracy. The Church too in spite of its basic democracy in religion was a stranger to any political democracy. But it was a monk, John Ball, who gave vent to a democratic slogan when he penned the famous lines:

“When Adam delved and Eve span,  
Who was then the gentleman?”

To people who had become habituated to autocracy and had no taste for liberty, democracy had no meaning. For the few who had read about democracy in Greece and developed a taste for it, it became a problem how to justify it and how to switch on to it. To them the idea of an original pre-political state of nature gave the possibility of having a social contract which could be the basis of social rights. To Thomas Hobbes of England goes the credit of having conceived of a state of nature in which men lived like animals without any law and order and the result was “the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” This suicidal state of affairs was brought to an end by the people coming together and entering into a social contract whereby they gave up their right to live as they pleased and selected a sovereign to rule over them. They promised absolute obedience in return for security. This is the legacy left by Hobbes in his classic *Leviathan*. It gives a plausible basis for the absolutism of historic times but it had no basis in human history or human biology or psychology. The Greeks were wise when they recognised man as fundamentally a social creature, born and rooted in some society and fostered in it. But the idea of social contract was of great importance as it served to show that political society was the result of a social pact and this went to show that all political power ultimately stemmed from the people. Hobbes was a coward by temperament and was eager to establish security even at the expense of liberty. He left the door open for a further development of the idea of social contract. This was done by John Locke who thought it worth while giving a philosophical justification for the English



Revolution, which had already sent one king to the scaffold and had in Locke's time driven away James II and installed in his place his daughter, Mary, and her husband William of Orange. Locke so conceived the Social Contract that the people, while surrendering their rights had safeguarded them by stipulating that if the sovereign failed to defend their rights and security they would have the right to depose the sovereign and install another in his place. Thus was reborn democracy in modern times at the philosophic level just as the English Revolution for the first time in modern times established the supremacy of the Parliament. Thus has the English Parliament become the Mother of Parliaments all over the world. Locke was also more precise in enunciating the natural rights of the people as the right to life, liberty, and property. While the rights to life and liberty are basic and self-explanatory, the right to property had to be established. In the state of nature every one had the right to appropriate what he liked, subject to his strength to keep it against rivals. But after the establishment of civil society the right to property had to be earned by the fact of one's mixing his labour with the soil. Once this was done, his right to private property was established. Thus more unconsciously than consciously ✓ Locke gave birth to the labour theory of value of which Karl Marx made a clever use and transformed it into the foundation of his socialism, which has come to be known to our generation as Communism or Bolshevism.

It was not long before Locke's ideas crossed across the English Channel and Rousseau's Social Contract gave a new turn in a country that was seething with discontent. Rousseau's book with its revolutionary opening sentence "man is born free but everywhere he is in chains" started a trail which culminated in the capture of Bastille in Paris, execution of Louis XVI and his

beautiful Queen, Marie Antoinette and the chaos that was the French Revolution. In spite of its horrors it was a great landmark in human history. Out of chaos was born the titanic Napoleon Bonaparte, a great military genius, a great statesman and a great romantic figure in the world of women. Defeated in war and love, he died an exile in a remote island. He has become almost a legend and established his claim as one who ushered in the era of democracy. This was a paradox for one who rose to be an Emperor and installed his relations on the thrones of Europe. But the fact remains that his rise marked the end of feudalism and his Code Napoleon introduced a new social order and his conquests gave rise to a wonderful upsurge of nationalism in Italy and Germany, while the countries that he failed to conquer, Russia and Spain, remained backward for another century. The principles of French Revolution in spite of Napoleonic Empire ultimately led to the establishment of democratic regimes all over Europe in the 19th century.

In the large country states of to-day the old city state type of Grecian democracy has become impossible. A new form had to be devised to mark the rule of the people, and this was done through the institution of representative government. No wonder that John Stuart Mill hailed it as the greatest political discovery of modern times. It has come to stay and has become the pattern of democracy in all the continents. Asia and Africa are pulsating with the new wine of democracy and nationalism.

The contents of democracy have varied with the times and the political genius of the people concerned. Democracy with its adult franchise has been a matter of very slow growth even in the West. The history of the House of Commons in England affords a brilliant example of



the slow but steady growth of democracy in England. For a century and a half after the English Revolution the landlord class was dominant. But the industrial revolution in the later years of the eighteenth century set in motion new forces: growth of new industrial cities, rise of a new class of the rich, the capitalists, and last but not the least labour with immense possibilities for the future. It was but a matter of time for the new cities and the new capitalists to demand representation in Parliament. It is not in the nature of conservative England to yield easily or willingly to new demands and there had to be a great deal of agitation and even rioting before the Reform Act of 1832 was passed and the House of Commons became more representative than it had ever been. Once the franchise came to be extended, further demands arose and the Reform Acts of 1868 and 1884-85 added to the number of voters. Women were excluded from voting. With the growth of education among women a demand for their voting rights was bound to arise and the women suffragettes had to fight a hard battle before their rights were accepted. Lady Astor, though American-born was the first woman member of the House of Commons. Adult franchise came only after the end of the first World War. With the extension of franchise millions of labourers came to be on the voting lists and the formation of a Labour party and even of a Labour Government were the logical developments in English political life. Even in America which has come to be looked upon as the bastion of democracy with Abraham Lincoln's famous definition of democracy as the government of the people, for the people, by the people, millions of negroes have still to struggle for their civil rights. Asian and African countries, however, which have gained their freedom from colonialism after the second world war have started with adult franchise

with doubtful advantage as many of them have already drifted into dictatorships or into communism.

Representative Government as Parliamentary Democracy has come to be very widely accepted both in theory and practice. But it has had its critics. Plato and Aristotle were no admirers of democracy, even though confined to Greek free citizens. Plato spoke of it as government of fools. Voltaire with his characteristic biting wit did not hesitate to say: "better to be governed by a lion than by a hundred rats."

Neither monarchy nor aristocracy is in favour to-day. But a dispassionate student of history cannot be blind to the great work done by monarchs and aristocrats in the evolution of human civilisation. No pure democracy has ever been possible except as mobocracy. There is the historic case of Aristides in ancient Athens. He was so popular and respected that he was always spoken of as Aristides the Just. One day, as the voting was taking place, Aristides saw one man voting against him. Aristides approached him to know the reason and he had the reply: "Oh, I am tired of everybody speaking of Aristides the Just." Mediocrities are ever jealous of the rich and the intellectual, but they have not been able to do without them.

Democracy becomes workable only on the basis of an assumed equality. One man one vote and adult franchise have come to be accepted by all democracies, but basically there is no equality. Let us study this concept of equality from all possible angles. Biologically no two individuals are alike, not even twins. Not even two thumb marks are the same, and this has made penology as a science possible. In character and in intellect there are endless variations. There are men in every society whose superiority is practically taken for granted. Which Indian can claim equality with Gandhiji and



which Englishman can claim equality with Shakespeare or Sir Winston Churchill? Psychologically each individual is an individual in his own right. One man can be a carbon copy of another only metaphorically. Because of it humanity is so rich and complex. Men cannot be mere machines as even Hitler discovered to his cost. He killed millions of Jews, but Jewish genius survives not merely in that miracle of modern times, Israel, but in the countless numbers of Jews who are at the helm of affairs in every advanced country in the world. Even economic equality is a mere dream. Communism has failed to achieve it. It can make the rich poor but it cannot equate wealth, for there are individuals who are just idlers and wastrels, through whose folly the cunning wise can prosper.

In human history racialism has played an important part. The Greeks claimed superiority over all others as mere barbarians. The Jews had an innate sense of superiority as the chosen people of God over the gentiles. The Aryans in India had no sympathy for Mlenchhas and created in the caste system a most rigid type of aristocratic society that the world has ever seen. Hitler's Germanic complex has been laid low, but there are Americans who still believe in the inherent superiority of the whites. The whites had come to establish their superiority in every field so that the coloured themselves had come to accept their inferiority. But this was a passing phase. The myth of white superiority was destroyed when Japan defeated Russia, and the half-naked Fakir of India undermined the very foundations of the British Empire so that its dismemberment followed more quickly than the whites or the browns or the blacks could have foreseen. When a group of international biologists, geneticians and anthropologists met in Moscow under the auspices of UNESCO to study the biological aspects of



race relations, they were forced to admit in the face of facts that "pure races in the sense of genetically homogeneous populations do not exist in the human species." In the face of the rising tide of Asians and Africans they had to admit that "the peoples of the world to-day appear to possess equal biological potentialities for attaining any civilisational level." So racialism may be dead and racial inequality may be a myth but the fact of human inequality within racial groups remains.

In the face of this, how is it possible to defend democracy? Negatively both monarchy and aristocracy have not proved to be unmixed blessings. They have led to a ruthless exploitation of the masses: poor, illiterate and helpless. But a time comes when even a worm turns and people have fought to get power in their hands so that they can improve their lot. They have succeeded, because revolutions can throw up new leaders. Modern representative governments offer a good mixture of fools and knaves on one hand and good and wise men on the other. Fools and knaves can vote, but power tends to slip into the hands of men who can lead. If by any mischance fools and knaves come to have the reins of power in their hands, democracy will be short-lived and dictatorships of individuals or of groups will arise and make mince meat of democracies as has happened in Europe and more recently in Asia and Africa where democracies have been on trial and not always emerged successfully. In spite of this I have not lost my faith in democracy as the best form of political organisation that we can hope to have. If it has failed, it is because it has not had the fulfilment of certain conditions, which are required for its success.

I believe in it because no other political ideology recognises the dignity of man as such, and his right to develop himself to the best of his capacity. Montesquieu

may have had his gibe that an Englishman is free only when he votes and that may be once in five or seven years as the case may be. But he failed to appreciate the ethical value of that vote which could go to dethrone a government and help to instal a government in which he has faith. It means political experience and development of political responsibility. Then there is the power of the Opposition to keep the government on tenterhooks, afraid to do a wrong act or pursue a wrong policy, always conscious of that public opinion which can sway votes even if it be but once in five or seven years. It was a great and deserved tribute to democracy when Stanley Baldwin, England's prime minister said in the House of Commons on 11 June 1936: "The corruption which accompanies dictatorships is generally hidden; the corruption which enters into a democracy is brought to light and must be dealt with drastically, and if there is any suggestion at all, it is that as a democratic assembly we are bound to take action. Consequently we cannot treat an offence or a mere mistake in high quarters less severely, than we should do, if it occurred among those whose responsibilities are far less. We are proud of the probity of our public servants and exact rightly a very high standard. We cannot expect a lower one for the members of this House or the members who hold positions in government."

All this is to the credit side of democracy. But it is the cussedness of human nature that we can talk more glibly of ideals than live up to them. A vote is a sacred responsibility, but it can be bought or sold for hard cash or for a kiss when even in so sedate and disciplined a country as England a Duchess could allow herself to be kissed by a butcher to gain his vote for so eminent a candidate as Charles Fox who could have secured votes on his own merits. Nor can we in our own country be



blind to the role that our cinema actresses have played in swaying votes.

If we look upon England as furnishing the finest example of a successful democracy in our times it is not difficult to see the conditions under which it has achieved success. The first and foremost is education. English democracy has been a matter of very slow growth extending over centuries. Parliamentary democracy in England is less than three hundred years old. Extension of franchise has kept pace with the growth of education. Universal education in England is but eighty years old, while adult franchise is barely forty years old.

Secondly, the press in England has played a great role in maintaining high democratic standards. It stands supreme even to-day though in terms of circulation the press in U.S.A. has attained astronomical proportions. *The Times* has never aspired to lead in the number of its readers, but it has aspired to lead the world in the correctness and authenticity of its news, in the sobriety of its views and its balanced tempo. It naturally has a wide circulation among the elite of England. It was a tribute to its greatness that Mussolini expressed a desire to learn English so that he could read *The Times*. It was equally a compliment that Woodrow Wilson, the great President of U.S.A. in the days of the first World War, would hasten to read *The Times* as soon as the mail came from England. By and large the English press has maintained a uniformly high standard of objectivity, independence and fearlessness, a true mirror of changing public opinion.

Thirdly, if the press has helped to develop public opinion it has also become a medium for public opinion to ventilate itself. In the days of Delane when he was the editor of *The Times* no important question would be brought up by the Government without a prior dis-

cussion with him across a breakfast table or over a cup of tea. Thus a good press expressing diverse views on public questions becomes a forum of discussion. It may be that each one of us has his favourite paper and allows his own views to be coloured by it, but this is a tribute to the paper that it can sell its views and policies to the public. Napoleon with his usual shrewdness recognised that "four hostile papers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets."

Fourthly, democracy requires tolerance. A mutual give-and-take policy is a desideratum for any healthy society. Truth is not the monopoly of any one individual or party. It often emerges out of a clash of opinions. It is a tribute to British democracy that political refugees from all parts of the world found a welcome refuge in Britain. Karl Marx is an outstanding example of this tolerance, that so revolutionary a book as *Das Kapital* could have been written in the placid precincts of the British Museum. Even Indians so anti-British as Mr. Krishna Menon found hospitality in London which he made full use of to lecture and write so as to build up a pro-Indian public. Such tolerance of views was impossible in Fascist Germany or Italy as it is impossible in communistic countries.

This type of extreme tolerance has its dangers. It may lead to a confusion of ideas and even open clashes between conflicting parties. There are two safeguards against these dangers. Even a democratic country must have a certain basic loyalty. The sterling patriotism of an Englishman has always the image of free England before him. It takes a concrete shape in the person of the King or Queen of England as the case may be. The Crown represents the continuity of English history and of all English peoples in what used to be known as the British Empire, now transformed into the British



Commonwealth which has lost its white complexion and has within its fold patriots who struggled against the dominance of the white British and made them yield the independence which was their due. It was done gracefully and peacefully and may well be looked upon as the greatest and sincerest achievement of democracy. In democratic U.S.A. presidents and congresses may come and go but there is the sanctity of the Constitution which enshrines the ideals for which Washington stood up against the might of England and for which Lincoln, though a prince of peace, waged a civil war. Democracy allows full freedom to discuss but not to fight except with words. It is the responsibility of a democratic administration to see that freedom does not degenerate into vulgar abuse or into fisticuffs. It is a part of democratic tradition to live and let live.

Thus it is that democracy is not merely political. It has a philosophy of its own and becomes a way of life, for which people are willing to live and die, if necessary. Briefly summarised, every democracy has as its watch-words: liberty, tolerance, loyalty to principles. A democrat tends to emerge as a man of humanity for whom "a man's a man for a' that."

✓ However good democracy may be in theory it is worth while seeing how it actually works. The democracies worth studying in detail are but few: United Kingdom and United States. We must be interested in our own democracy too. Russia presents a different type of democracy. Other democracies worth mentioning are France and Switzerland and the Nordic countries. Switzerland stands in a class by itself. With its system of referendum where laws can be passed by the people directly it is the nearest approximation to Greek democracy among modern states. It has become possible because Switzerland is a small country content with itself, with no



colonial or imperial ambitions. France as the home of the French Revolution may well have become great as a democracy, but with its plurality of parties it has not become a conspicuous success. If it has survived even three crushing defeats it is because of the permanent civil service and a remarkable spirit of patriotic pride which went to the making of Napoleon and is to be found in President DeGaulle to-day, who has subtly transformed French democracy into a benevolent dictatorship. Perhaps the spirit of French democracy is to be found in a saying of Gamelin. He was once asked whether he favoured the Right or the Left and he answered: "Both. And the Middle. As long as they are France."

→ Scandinavian countries like Norway, Sweden and Denmark are usually cited as the best examples of a welfare state. They are small and compact. They have no martial ambitions, though they always keep themselves strong enough to defend the liberties of their countries. Like England they are monarchic but have strong parliaments. They have had millionaires of the type and stature of Alfred Bernhard Nobel, who made money out of devastating war machines but gave away his wealth to institute Nobel Prizes for the best work every year in Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature and the greatest service to the cause of peace during the year. The prizes are truly international, for India and Japan and even Russia have produced Nobel Laureates, though the number may be small compared to the winners of the Prizes in Britain, U.S.A., Germany and France.

While studying democracy in practice it may be well to follow the example of Plato. When he wanted to study the principles of justice and other moral virtues in individuals he thought it better to study them on the

wider canvass of the State. So too in these brief lectures it will be advantageous to focus attention on the big democracies that are to be found in United Kingdom, United States of America, and India as representing parliamentary democracy, and finally Russia as representing communist democracy.



## DEMOCRACY IN PRACTICE: UNITED KINGDOM AND UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FEW WOULD CARE to deny that democracy in spite of all its palpable defects is the best type of government one could devise in theory. We shall now proceed to see how it works in practice. United Kingdom and United States of America offer themselves as the best types of democracies of the western parliamentary type. We shall consider India too, as she is the largest democracy in the world to-day and the only one in Asia—apart from Japan—which has survived. A few general observations will help us to understand the pitfalls which a successful democracy will have to overcome. Democracy under the best of conditions can only function as the rule of the majority. John Stuart Mill as the champion of liberty was not blind to the danger of the tyranny of the majority, a tyranny which can be much more ruthless than the tyranny of a monarch or a few aristocrats. Immature democracies are apt to interpret majorities in terms of fixed majorities whether religious or racial or communal. Such fixed majorities are in fact a negation of democracy for they merely perpetuate a state of society in which a particular section of the society has come to have a dominant interest and they want to maintain it in the guise of a majority. A genuine democracy seeks to rise above such sectional predominance.



In a genuine democracy the majority party represents certain views and policies which are bound to change according to the exigencies of the times. In other words such a majority is mobile. It is open to a man to belong to one party to-day, to-morrow he can change his party. If a party is to function successfully in a democracy, there must be a certain stability and this stability implies a loyalty on the part of the member of a party. But there is a limit to this loyalty, for loyalty to a party must not transcend loyalty to the country. In short a successful democracy can work only on the basis of a mobile democracy. This is exemplified most clearly in the working of the British democracy and of American democracy.

#### UNITED KINGDOM

It has been a tradition for the British people to muddle through. They are averse to systematising. This is well illustrated by the famous Cambridge professor of philosophy, Henry Sidgwick. Germans as a people are intensely prone to evolve systems of thought. A German student was preparing a thesis on Sidgwick's philosophy and naturally wanted to present it as a system. But failing to detect any system he thought it best to go to the fountain head and wrote to Sidgwick himself as to what his *Weltanschauung* (world view) was and the learned professor replied on a post card: "I have no idea." A lack of system marks British philosophy, basically empirical. The same may be said of British politics. It is not based on any single Act of Parliament. It has just grown. It is full of anomalies which are perplexing to a foreigner. But the English have a core of common sense, a remarkably high sense of duty and a wonderful willingness to compromise. Literally they can manage to

muddle through. They lose battles and win wars. The British Constitution is a fine illustration of how, the British qualities have gone to the forging of their constitution, based on a few laws but mostly moulded by conventions.

The British political system rests on three institutions: The Crown, the Parliament and the Judiciary. The British like the ancient Romans are fundamentally conservative. They can carry through even revolutionary reforms with a sense of historic continuity. The Crown has lost power, but not prestige. The House of Lords is just a relic of old British aristocracy, shorn of power and prestige except in so far as the scions of old aristocratic families still play their part in British politics through their own individual merits. Sir Winston Churchill is the finest example of an Englishman who refused to be a Lord and preferred to be the greatest commoner in British history. The House of Commons has come to be the centre of British politics. The barons played their part in forcing the Magna Carta out of King John, struggling against the growing autocracy of the Tudors, and finally humiliating the Stuarts and limiting the power of kings. In their turn they have had to yield to the rising power of British demos so that the House of Commons has come to be the supreme body with the House of Lords as a mere appendix and the Crown as a unifying force but without real power. So we come to the idea of a limited monarchy. The House of Commons is elected once in five years and has members elected from single member constituencies. The total number varies according to the population, the number at present being 630. In British politics usually two parties predominate. In the 18th century they used to be Whigs and Tories. In the 19th century they used to be known as Liberals and Conservatives. The Irish



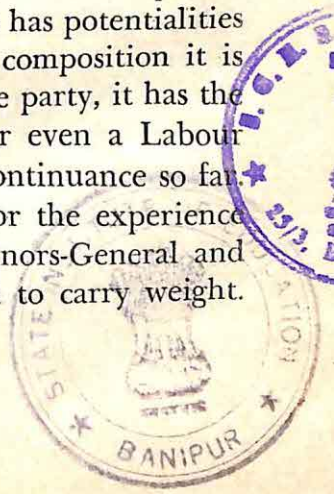
Home Rule party emerged for a time but disappeared with Ireland becoming independent. Towards the end of the 19th century the Labour Party emerged and in the course of the twentieth century it has supplanted the Liberal Party, which exists but has been reduced to insignificant numbers. It counts only when the party in power has a small majority as the Labour Government at present. It has to be admitted that election figures can be taken only as a rough indication of political opinion. One or two examples will go to show how unreliable elections can be from the standpoint of strict justice, e.g., in the 1900 elections the Unionists won 402 seats and the Home Rulers 268. But in proportion to votes the Unionists should have got only 343 seats and the Home Rulers 327. So the real majority should have been only 16 as against the actual majority of 134. Similarly in the general election of 1906 the Ministerialists won 513 seats and the Unionists 157 seats. But in proportion to the number of voters the Ministerialists should have got only 387 seats and the Unionists 283. Thus the Ministerialists had a majority of 356, when according to the number of voters their majority should have been only 104. In an earlier election in 1886 the Conservatives had a majority of 104 in the House of Commons while in the country at large the Liberals had a majority 54,817. Even in the last election of 1964 the Liberal party polled four million votes but they were able to win only nine seats. Their total votes came to 11.2 per cent of all the votes cast and on this basis the Liberals should have got about 70 seats in the House of Commons. These examples suffice to show that elections give only a rough test of political opinion. To overcome this defect the proportional system of representation has been recommended, but it would give such small majorities to prospective governments that stability of govern-



ment would be affected and that is why seasoned parliamentarians like Sir Winston Churchill have been against it and they prefer to muddle through with the rough majorities they can get.

The House of Commons has come to establish its supremacy in several ways. It has monopolised the control over finance by the Parliament Act of 1911 that money bills can originate only in the House of Commons and the House of Lords has to accept them if the House of Commons has passed it in three successive sessions. Every bill passed by the House of Commons goes to the House of Lords and the Lords can pass or reject or amend the bills that come before them. The number of Lords in the House of Lords varies, for the Government can create as many peers as they like. In fact the Government has a hold on the Lords by threatening to create any required number of peers to give the Government a majority to have any bill passed. Such a threat was held out by the Liberal Government in the early years of the twentieth century, and the Lords yielded as a matter of common sense and maintained their inborn dignity. The House of Lords has come to be looked upon as an ornate body in many quarters, but it has its historic prestige, which counts in conservative England, and its inherited abilities. To-day many peers have taken to business and industry and wield enormous influence. Recently life peerage has been created, which is open to women too. Thus the House of Lords has potentialities of making itself felt. Though by its composition it is mainly a stronghold of the Conservative party, it has the wisdom to adapt itself to a Liberal or even a Labour Government and this has secured its continuance so far. It plays a useful part within limits, for the experience of its members as Viceroys and Governors-General and heads of big business houses is bound to carry weight.

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Long ago in the days of Irish Home Rule Agitation Queen Victoria forced a dissolution of the House of Commons and the electorate gave its verdict in favour of the Crown and the House of Lords. This was a solitary case and it happened long ago in the last century, but it shows the elasticity of the British Constitution.

Though in theory the House of Commons is supreme in actual fact the real power has passed into the hands of the Cabinet, which represents the majority in the House of Commons. In the Victorian days the House of Commons was at the height of its power and glory. The brilliance of the debates between Gladstone and Disraeli gave a glamour to the House of Commons. But since that day the party machinery has become so powerful and the whips so commanding in their demands that the average member of the House of Commons has lost his importance. He has become a tool in the hands of the party bosses. In recent decades a new convention has come into existence which prevents a member of the House of Lords from becoming the prime minister, the most coveted office in British politics. So brilliant and dazzlingly intellectual a man as Lord Curzon was kept out. It brought tears to so "superior a person" as Curzon as a ditty of his Oxford days had dubbed him. More recently the Earl of Home preferred to give up his peerage so that he could become the prime minister of England.

The Judiciary in England has had a long and glorious history. It has been marked by high traditions of learning and integrity. Even so bitter a critic as Mahatma Gandhi was an admirer of it. The barrister in him spoke out when he described it as the most precious gift of the British to India. The judiciary in England has played a great role in defending the liberties of English citizens. It has been a great check on the autocracy of



the government as it was on the autocracy of kings. But it occupies no such high position in British Constitution as in the U.S.A. or Indian Constitution. The Parliament remains the supreme legislature, but since no law is perfect in its formulation there is always room for interpretation and it is in this interpreting role that the British judiciary has played a great role. The importance of the case law in the British courts arises out of this function. Legislation provides for the removal of a judge from the Supreme Court, but it is a tribute to the greatness of the character of British judges that this law has not had to be invoked since the English Revolution nearly three centuries ago.

The last but not the least important limb of British Constitution is the Crown. Compared to the powers that the Tudors enjoyed and the Stuarts aspired to enjoy, the Crown to-day is powerless, though in theory it enjoys equality with the House of Commons and the House of Lords, for no law passed by both these Houses can become law until it is signed by the King. In strict theory the King is the head of the army, the navy and the air force. It is the King's Army, the King's Navy, the King's Air Force. It is the King's Government that rules with the majority in the House of Commons. Even the Opposition is spoken of as His Majesty's Opposition and the leader of the Opposition is paid a salary like the prime minister and his colleagues in the Cabinet. But by a convention that no king has challenged since the English Revolution, he is content to accept every law passed by the Parliament and to let the Cabinet rule in his name. History and circumstances have favoured this evolution of absolute monarchy into a limited monarchy. Even after the English Revolution the King had considerable powers. He could have presided over cabinet meetings and thus influenced decisions. But George I came to



the English throne as a foreigner and had no knowledge of English so that he was not in a position to make himself felt. Power inevitably slipped into the hands of the prime minister. Sir Robert Walpole made full use of his opportunities and since then the prime minister has become the most important political figure in England. But the halo of glory still clings round the person of the king. None of the early Georges was particularly attractive. If anything, there were reasons for their becoming unpopular. But the long and dignified reign of Queen Victoria went far to fix the image of royalty on the public mind. She was immensely popular in spite of her almost puritanical principles. As a woman she was very prolific and with her children and grandchildren married into every royal family of Europe she came to have intimate personal ties with foreign governments of Europe. It is a very common idea, especially in India, that English kings are absolutely powerless. In strict theory this may be true. Bagehot, an astute student of British politics, noted, the Queen had only the right to be informed, to be consulted and to warn. Moreover the prime ministers may come and go but the personality of the King or Queen as the case may be is a constant factor and Queen Victoria's long experience and astuteness and consciousness of her own importance could not but have made her influence felt, especially with so refined and courteous a prime minister as Disraeli. Under him the British Empire rose to the peak of its glory and he added to her pride by having her enthroned as Empress of India.

Edward VII was gay and a lover of Parisian life. He was perhaps more popular in France than in his own country and the entente between England and France was his achievement. France and England had been traditional enemies for centuries, but this new friendship

and alliance was a safeguard against the rising ambitions of Kaiser William II, which ultimately led to the first World War and the end of the haughty Hohenzollerns. Surely this was no mean achievement for a king constitutionally powerless to do anything. His son, George V was a man of more steady habits than his father, but he is reputed to have played his role in hastening the grant of independence to Ireland and undoing the partition of Bengal and transferring the seat of Indian Government from Calcutta to Delhi. Edward VIII created history by abdicating the throne of England to be free to marry the woman of his choice, who was not welcome either to the royal family or to the prime minister of the day, Stanley Baldwin and the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is significant that Sir Winston Churchill with the memories of his own American mother saw no wrong in an English king marrying an American commoner, even though divorced. This royal romance has now lasted a generation and will rank among the best known love stories in the history of humanity. What is noteworthy is that Edward VIII was very popular with his socialistic learnings and could have created a crisis by resisting the pressure of his family and political advisers, but like a patriotic Englishman he did not want his country to be divided on the question of his marriage and preferred to abdicate his throne rather than give up his right as a man to marry the woman he loved. Historians of the future will be in a better position to pass the final verdict on an episode on which much could be said on both sides.

The British constitution is an excellent system of checks and balances. The strength of the Cabinet depends on the quantum of loyal support that it can get from the majority party in the House of Commons. If the members show resistance to the Cabinet it is open to the prime minister to advise the King to dissolve the



House of Commons. This means another election and elections are so costly that members will not ordinarily care to face it. The House of Lords, though shorn of all powers, can yet help to delay legislation. Given time public opinion may be so cultivated as to justify the House of Lords or the Government may soften legislation so as to get an easy passage of legislation. If the worse comes to the worst the Commons may reiterate their first opinion so that it can become law even if the Lords do not pass it. The King occupies a unique position. Politically he can only advise and at best can only assert himself behind the scenes. But he represents in his person the embodiment of British history and the unity of the Empire as it existed till recently. Even to-day though the Commonwealth, as it has come to be, contains Asiatic and African nations, the King of England figures as its head. In the social life of Britain and her Dominions not merely the King, but every member of the royal family commands the respect and love of the British peoples to a degree that rouses the wonder of the world. King Farrukh of Egypt was once asked by a correspondent during the second world war how many kings would survive at the end of the war, and he shrewdly replied: "Five: the king of hearts, the king of diamonds, the king of clubs, the king of spades and the King of England." Presumably he was conscious of his own doom to die an exile from the land of his own power and glory. Anatole France with his usual wit said that even when England would accept socialism she would continue to have her king. The reception that Queen Elizabeth received during her visit to independent India bore all the marks of sincerity and enthusiasm which could not have been expected from people who had but a few years earlier struggled against the British to achieve their independence.



If ancient Rome lives in modern Europe through her law and administration, England will live in India through her democracy and her judicial system, administrative efficiency and the impress of English language on all aspects of Indian life, all of which can claim to be the legacy of two centuries of British rule in India.

#### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

U.S.A. is a child of Britain, but it was born in rebellion and the child has grown up in a very independent way. While the Constitution aimed at imitating the British Constitution, it had to make so many changes to adapt itself to its own new conditions that its Constitution turned out to be radically different from its parent. There was no hereditary monarchy and so an elected President had to be brought in. There were no Lords in the country and so a second chamber had to be created on new and fresh lines. Locke had described the English Constitution as made up of checks and balances, though it was not so rigidly compartmentalised as the description might lead one to believe. The framers of the U.S.A. Constitution took Locke literally at his word and produced a Constitution where the Executive was distinct from the Legislature and both from the judiciary. The basic difference was that while the British Constitution had grown and is still growing, the American Constitution was made. While the former has been very flexible, the latter has been more or less rigid, for the Constitution could not be changed, unless two-thirds of the members of each House vote for the change or two-thirds of the States legislatures apply for a change and in either case three-fourths of the States must ratify the change. This is so cumbrous a process that it could not be resorted to except when really needed and so in the period

of nearly 180 years the Constitution has been amended only twenty-four times, the most notable being the one after the end of the Civil War in which the North under Abraham Lincoln emerged triumphant and slavery was abolished. Before the States finally decide, the Congress, the equivalent of the British Parliament, can direct the States legislatures to decide the question or order the States to hold special conventions made up of delegates elected by the people to vote on the issue.

While the British Parliament has complete authority to legislate for England, Wales, Scotland and North Ireland, the U.S.A. Constitution as a federal constitution has to safeguard the rights of the States, and so the legislative authority has had to be shared between the central or federal government of the Congress and the States legislatures. While different spheres of legislation have been laid down with great ingenuity, differences of opinions whether a particular subject for legislation is federal or state are bound to arise and all such differences have to be determined by the Judiciary. Hence the Supreme Court in U.S.A. has come to have far greater importance than its counterpart in Britain. Had the Federal Government authority to abolish slavery when the Southern States were opposed to it and were prepared to fight for their right to secede from the Union? The genius of Lincoln saved the Union, though it meant a civil war. Great presidents have often had to introduce measures that were not acceptable to the States as e.g., in the depression of 1930 regulation of wages, insurance prices were claimed to fall within the federal authority. Even in our own times the question of admitting negro children to all schools and all restaurants and hotels has come up for decision before the Supreme Court and Chief Justice Warren has been making history by deciding in favour



of negroes, supporting the reformist policies of leaders like the late President J. F. Kennedy, who like Lincoln before him has had to pay the price of greatness by being assassinated.

The framers of the U.S.A. Constitution looked upon John Locke as their chief guide and in following his lead went much beyond him. Locke's emphasis on the separation of the three limbs of government was taken too seriously by the framers of the American Constitution and as a result of it devised a constitution markedly different from the British Constitution. Corresponding to the British Parliament there is the Congress consisting of two houses: the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House of Representatives is composed of 435 members elected every two years from among the fifty states that go to constitute the United States of America. The Constitution provides for one representative for every 30,000 of the population. But to avoid an unwieldy house there are single member constituencies of about 350,000 each. The representative must be at least 25 years old, must have been a citizen of U.S.A. for seven years and at the time of election he must be the resident of the State from which he is elected. The salary of a representative is 22500 dollars a year of which 3000 dollars may be tax free. In Indian currency it works out at Rs. 9,300 a month. The House enjoys the same powers as the British House of Commons including complete control over money bills.

The Senate is the second house of the legislature. It consists of two members from each State for six years, one third of the members retiring every two years so that it has a continuity of existence. The number is fixed at two irrespective of the size or the population of each state.

The work of legislation is taken up by the Congress



in a very serious way, more seriously than anywhere else in the world perhaps. A casual visitor to either house of the Congress will often find the houses depleted of attendance and it may create an impression that the Congress is a very leisurely body. The fact is that most of the work is done by Committees. Every bill is presented by a member either on his own initiative or on behalf of his constituency's petition. Members of the President's cabinet or the President himself may suggest legislation, the most important of such executive communications being the annual Message from the President transmitting the proposed budget to the Congress. Every bill is referred to one of the committees formed by each House, twenty in the House of Representatives and sixteen in the Senate with specified classification of the bills. Each committee is composed of members of both the parties in proportion to their strength in each House. The Committees may sub-divide themselves into sub-committees so that each bill may receive full attention. The Committees have the right to call witnesses and only after each clause of the bill has been thoroughly discussed and agreement arrived at, the bill is presented to the House for formal acceptance because the bill has been already discussed so thoroughly. If a Committee does not find a bill suitable it may be stopped from going to the Congress. This is called just tabling of the bill.

Apart from bills the Congress may pass resolutions which have the same effect as the bills, i.e., they are a part of law. They are called joint resolutions, though they are passed by each House separately. It is noteworthy that with very few exceptions the Committees are not expected to sit while the House is in session except with special permission. Apart from the Committees the House may resolve itself into a Committee of the whole

House, where the quorum is reduced to 100 instead of the normal 218. Voting is effected by voice or by standing or a regular division, if so demanded by one fifth of the quorum required. Each House has its own rules of procedure. In cases of acute difference of opinions there is provision for Conferences attended by "managers" as representatives of each House, and they may be of one party, though usually the minority party is given due weight in all committees.

This complex procedure makes the work of legislation slow, but it ensures a real study of the pro's and con's and prevents legislation from being slipshod. The American system is markedly superior to the British or Indian methods as in these two countries only a few important bills are referred to joint select committees of both the houses.

A Senator must be at least 30 years old and must have been a resident of U.S.A. for nine years. In case a Senator dies or resigns, the Governor of the State has the power to nominate a successor till the next general election. Unlike the British House of Lords the Senate is a very powerful body. Apart from having all the powers of the House of Representatives except where finances are concerned, it enjoys the following privileges:

1. It can refuse its consent and block the President's choice of officials.
2. It can approve by a two-thirds majority any treaty of U.S.A.
3. It has the sole right to try all impeachments, though the House of Representatives has the sole right to impeach.

As in Britain there are only two main parties: the Republicans and the Democrats. But the parties in



spite of all the noise they create are not rigidly organised. Almost one-third of the Americans are independent, having no party affiliations. Ten to fifty per cent of the electors do not care to exercise their vote. Moreover while the Conservatives and the Labour parties in Britain have markedly different policies, the Republicans and the Democrats in U.S.A. have no such rigidly different policies. E. S. Griffiths in his *American System of Government* says: "To those accustomed to the orderly responsible clarity of British Parliamentary Government the American system gives the impression of confusion, disorder, irresponsibility, frustration, yielding to pressures of special interests. One may grant a measure of truth to all this, but the effect or result or end-product seems somehow to belie this indictment." Elsewhere he admits that "the much higher tone of British party organisation makes its American counterpart difficult to understand." Similarly Allan Nevins in his *American Democracy* writes: "Defying the pattern makers it is the hardest democracy in the world to get inside a book." I realised the truth of this when a president of an American University visiting India admitted that he was a Democrat, but when he learned that Adlai Stevenson was standing for the presidency as a Republican he changed his mind and gave his vote to Stevenson as a better candidate. Thus it is clear that the party system in America exists very loosely for Americans, and they do not make a fetish of party loyalty.

The office of the President is the most original part of the U.S.A. Constitution. Unlike the King of England who is divested of all real power, the President of U.S.A. is endowed with so much power that he becomes for the time being the most powerful man in the world. He has to be at least 35 years old and must have been a citizen of the U.S.A. for at least 14 years. He is elected for four



years and he can be re-elected only once. During his term of office he is irremovable except by impeachment which has never happened. If he dies, the Vice-President immediately succeeds so that the State is never without a head, a variant of the British principle: "The King is dead. Long live the King." Some Presidents have been victims of assassination, the most notable being Abraham Lincoln and John Fitzgerald Kennedy. It was the original intention of the makers of the Constitution that the election of the President should ensure the election of the best and it was laid down that it should be done by an Electoral College, specially elected for electing a president. The College was constituted of persons selected by voters of each state equal in number to the number of its Representatives and Senators in the two houses of the Congress. The idea was to elect the best electors who would select the best man as president. But this idea has been completely given up in practice. The office of the President is so important that all the citizens of the U.S.A. are interested in it and would like to have a direct voice in the election. The Electoral College has not been abolished but it has been ingeniously and completely by-passed. It has now become the established practice for each of the two parties, the Democrats and the Republicans to select their own party candidate for the presidency. The members of the electoral college are elected on the basis of their agreeing to vote for the Democratic or Republican party candidate. In other words the citizens of U.S.A. decide whom they want as President and the Electoral College becomes only a mouth-piece of the citizens at large and the wisdom of the Electoral College has evaporated before the pressure of public opinion. It must be said to the credit of American demos that really first class people have been elected as Presidents, in some cases regular political

geniuses like Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt and John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

\* The powers of the President are immense. Every bill passed by the Congress has to receive his approval. Unlike the King of England he has the right to veto a bill, but he must do so within ten days, else the bill becomes law even without his approval. If within ten days he does choose to exercise his right to veto, the bill has to go back to the Congress and must be passed by a two-thirds majority. This is a substantial check on the Congress. It is a tribute both to the successive Presidents and Congresses that only seventy-one bills have been passed overriding the President's veto.

He has further important powers. He can send messages to the Congress, covering important points of policy. He can suggest legislation. He cannot initiate it, since he as Executive cannot encroach on the legislative rights of the Congress. He can appoint judges of the Supreme Court and he himself functions as the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Commensurate with these powers, which make him the most powerful man in the whole world, he is paid a salary of a hundred thousand dollars, which works out at Rs. 46,000 a month. This is by no means high considering the high cost of living in U.S.A. and the high salaries paid to the members of the Congress apart from a room and a secretary given to each member of the Congress.

The most important difference between the British and the American Constitutions is to be found in the organisation of the Executive. In Britain the leader of the majority party in the House of Commons is called upon by the King to form the government. He becomes the prime minister and has the full authority to appoint his colleagues in the different ministries. He is responsi-



ble to the House of Commons and through it to the electorate. If the House of Commons passes a vote of no confidence in the government of the day, which can hardly happen in these days of tight party organisation, the Government has to resign and the leader of the Opposition may be called upon to form another government or the prime minister may advise the King to dissolve the House of Commons and thus force an appeal to the electorate. Even if the leader of the Opposition agrees to form a government he may not command the requisite majority to carry on the government and he may be forced to advise the King to dissolve the House of Commons. All these complexities are avoided in the American Constitution, because the President has the right to appoint secretaries, who are responsible to him and not to the Congress. Thus the President has his own Cabinet of nine secretaries, of whom the Secretary of State is the chief. The other secretaries look after finance, defence, justice, post office, agriculture, commerce, labour and interior (home affairs). Needless to say that with the sharp division between the legislature and the executive the Secretaries are not members of either house of the Congress. If the legislature is dissatisfied with the work of the executive, the brunt of the attack has to be borne by the President. No wonder that no president has found his office a bed of roses. John Adams looked upon it as the four most miserable years of his life, and Garfield said: "my God, what is there in this place that a man should ever want to get in it?" Some have paid for their greatness with their life and others have laid down the burden of their office with a sigh of relief. But all have had the consciousness of great opportunities to do good and lead the world.

The third limb of American Constitution is the  
✓ Judiciary and it has also come to have a high and unique



place. Perhaps it is the most powerful judiciary in the world. With a written constitution dividing the spheres of legislation between the central federal government and the States Governments it is in a position to control the legislature and executive alike. With its powers of interpreting laws it has come to be a law-making body. In front of the Capital in Washington stands the statue of John Marshall, the first great Chief Justice of U.S.A. It is symbolic as being the controlling authority over the legislature. The judges of the Supreme Court by their constitutional judgments have made for Creative Jurisprudence. In domestic politics there is no problem so bristling with difficulties as the negro problem. It was Abraham Lincoln who set them free and Kennedy sought to give a meaning to that freedom by doing away with racial bars in restaurants and hotels, schools and colleges and universities. Both have paid for their human and progressive policies with their lives. If Kennedy died with the consciousness of having done the right thing, it was only because Chief Justice Warren was there to give a liberal interpretation to his policies.

American democracy after two world wars has come to dominate the world as the bastion of freedom. After the first World War America faltered and failed to give support to Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations. Monroe Doctrine was perhaps good enough for the American Continents, but to have sought for the isolation of America in the twentieth century was a tragic blunder. It made the second world war almost inevitable and the folly of Japan in attacking Pearl Harbour brought America once more into the picture of world politics and her emergence as the victor has compelled the Americans to accept their role as the champions of liberty in the world to-day.

Abraham Lincoln has come to be looked upon as the

Prophet of Freedom. No statesman in the world has created phrases to be quoted time and again in all the continents as Lincoln. He has literally created a Bible of Freedom. "This Government cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free." "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master." "Give him that is needy is the Christian rule of charity, but take from him that is needy is the rule of slavery." "Let us have faith that right makes might." And so one can go on quoting from the Master. No monument is so impressive in its simplicity or so eloquent with his Gettysburg speech as the Lincoln Monument in Washington. Woodrow Wilson was a worthy follower of his, though he died a broken-hearted man as the victim of politicians. Franklin Roosevelt lived to be a victor and to reap the fruits of victory with the edifice of U.N.O. as the beacon light to guide the path to peace. In his message to the Congress on 6th January 1941 he sent a message to the whole world: "What I seek to convey is the historic truth that the United States as a nation has at all times maintained a clear definite opposition to any attempt to lock us in behind an ancient Chinese Wall while the procession of civilisation went past. To-day thinking of our children and their children we oppose enforced isolation for ourselves or for any other part of the Americas."

So U.S.A. has taken upon its own shoulders the responsibility of fostering democracy all over the world even if it means waging a war in Korea and Vietnam. World opinion is sharply divided about the wisdom or justifiability of this policy. Only the future will decide, for nothing succeeds like success, whether the success be of U.S.A. or her intrepid opponents.

Any way America is trying to live up to her pledge



given to the world by President Franklin Roosevelt. As a preliminary to the establishment of United Nations Organisation as a guarantee of future peace and prevention of war he laid down the principles of the Atlantic Charter in terms of Four Freedoms:

Freedom of Speech,

Freedom to worship God in his own way everywhere in the world.

Freedom from Want

Freedom from Fear

Of these Russia is genuinely interested only in the Freedom from Want. She has no use for the other three freedoms. And that is what divides the world to-day into hostile camps. Both have their own ideologies, both are highly advanced in science and technology, both are fully armed and both are prepared to fight, though both are genuinely afraid of launching another war more disastrous than the previous two world wars.

It has to be sadly admitted that American democracy still suffers a stigma that in spite of all her high-flown talk about freedom and democracy the negroes still suffer from political inequality and social disabilities. Racial prejudices have sunk deep into the consciousness of southern states. But let it said to the credit of the American Government as such that they have been doing their best. Chief Justice Warren has played a great part by his historic judgments in favour of the negroes. Kennedy was not allowed to live to push through his Civil Liberties Bill. It is to the credit of President Johnson that in spite of his southern upbringing he is doing his best to complete the work of his illustrious predecessor. In his Civil Rights message delivered before a joint session of the U.S.A. Congress on 15 March 1965



President Lyndon Johnson did not mince words when he said:

"As a man whose roots go deeply into Southern soil I know how agonizing racial feelings are. I know how difficult it is to reshape attitudes and the structure of society.

But a century has passed since the negro was freed.

And he is not fully free.

A century has passed since equality was promised. And he is not equal.

A century has passed since the day of promise. And the promise is unkept.

The time of justice has now come. No force can hold it back. It is right in the eyes of man and God—that it should come. And when it does that day will brighten the lives of every American."

Earlier in the same Message he said:

"To those who seek to avoid action by their national government in their communities—who seek to maintain purely local control over elections—the answer is simple:

Open your polling places to all your people.

Allow men and women to register and vote, whatever the colour of their skin.

Extend the rights of citizenship to every citizen.

There is no constitutional issue here. The command of the Constitution is plain.

There is no moral issue. It is wrong to deny any American that right to vote.

There is no issue of states rights or national rights.

✓ There is only the struggle for human rights."

The worst critic of America cannot say that the Government is not doing its best to do the right thing. With a negro leader like Rev. Luther King, who has taken the

message of Gandhiji to his heart, embarking on a genuinely non-violent struggle to vindicate the rights of his race, the reactionaries in America are bound to be put to shame before an admiring world. The day is not far distant when the image of America will shine in full glory as the champion of liberty and equality and human rights.



### 3

## DEMOCRACY IN PRACTICE

### INDIA

INDIA HAS the distinction of being the largest democracy in the world. She has also the distinction of having the longest written constitution in the world. It is a matter of common experience that the last in time tends to be the best, because it has the advantage of avoiding the mistakes of the predecessors and of improving on them. The Constituent Assembly was brought into being to frame a constitution for India and after a long sitting of two years it produced a constitution which is far from being perfect. The leaders of India had been educated in the principles of British constitution and there was a marked tendency to borrow from Britain as much as possible. But Britain has no written constitution and India has gone in for a written constitution. Britain has a hereditary monarchy, but India has gone in for a republic with an elected president. This can only be based on the American model. It has not been easy to reconcile these twin sources of our constitution and there has resulted a wobbling. This has been further complicated by doses of Russian communism, which have led to numerous amendments of the Constitution, more numerous in fifteen years than the number of amendments to the American constitution in 170 years. Born in an atmosphere of high and noble ideals it has provisions which have created difficulties and raised constitutional issues which have gone to give an importance to the

Supreme Court of India which its counterpart in England does not have and which inevitably has to lean on the guidance afforded by the decisions of the Supreme Court of U.S.A.

The Preamble to the Constitution follows the model of U.S.A. and emphasises the principles of Justice, social political and economic; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; of equality of status and opportunity and lastly fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation. The Preamble is well conceived and in good democratic tradition of Western Democracies.

Part III of the Constitution is devoted to Fundamental Rights, guaranteeing equality (thus abolishing untouchability), the usual freedoms including the right to free movement in the country, residing and settling in any part of India, holding property and disposing it of, and practising any profession or carrying on any occupation, trade or business.

Perhaps the most original part of the Indian Constitution is to be found in Part IV dealing with the Directive Principles of State Policy. Whilst most of them are sound, they impose a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of a young and developing democracy with poor economic resources. Even so reasonable a directive as to have free and compulsory education until the age of fourteen is far from being fulfilled even after 17 years of independence. Section 47 ventures to provide that "The State . . . shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health." The language is very mild and only talks of "endeavour." Nevertheless after the experience of U.S.A. there was no justification for introducing a directive principle of this type. The military forces have



been exempted. Most of the states are still wet. The few that have gone dry have done so with disastrous consequences. It has only encouraged illicit distillation so much so that it has come to be the most flourishing cottage industry in these States. Smuggling has become lucrative. The police has directly or indirectly connived at it, for it has become a secondary source of income, more paying than the primary source of salaries. More people have taken to drinking than ever before and crores of rupees have been lost in excise revenue and worst of all it has led to a loss of respect for law and order. Ministers have been known to be addicted to drinking. One of them is even reputed to have said that prohibition was meant for the masses and not for the classes. India is passing through all the evils that U.S.A. passed through during the twenty years of its prohibition policy. Common sense triumphed in U.S.A. and prohibition has been abolished but not without terrible consequences seen in the break-down of American morality as seen in the increase of delinquents among the teenagers, both male and female. Let it be also admitted that the milk bars that were started to wean away people from the public bars have come to stay to the immense advantage of public health. The leaders of the Congress party have begun to admit in public that prohibition has failed, as for example the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, but he has been hampered by the policy makers in Delhi and congressmen who have found in prohibition a lucrative source of income.

Another directive that has proved of doubtful value is with reference to the introduction of Hindi as the official language of India fifteen years after the Constitution came into force. It is acknowledged that no question was discussed with such bitterness and vehemence as the language question. Even Pandit Jawaharlal

Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad were surprised and even shocked at the display of fanaticism on behalf of Hindi. It is almost certain that it would not have been carried if it had been put to an open vote or placed before the country at large. But the leaders of India thought they were on trial and must place before the world a constitution unanimously approved by its sovereign body, the Constituent Assembly. Canvassing and to use a homely Indian expression *samjaoing* triumphed and a compromise resolution was passed making Hindi the official language of India, the script to be Devanagiri. Wisdom prevailed to the extent that a door was left open for English to continue even after the lapse of fifteen years. Even before this period the Government had to bend before the agitation in South India and Bengal and English was permitted to continue as an associate official language. This was an oral assurance given by Pandit Nehru. But somebody in Delhi blundered and about 26 January 1965 communications were issued in Hindi only which roused the passions of South Indians in their thousands. A good many precious lives were lost, many more injured, and lakhs worth of buildings and property was destroyed. It was a sad commentary on the non-violence of Indians. But the situation was grave enough to evoke second thoughts. Two South Indian ministers in Delhi resigned and they came back only when assured that the oral assurances of Pandit Nehru would be given statutory sanction. The question is still a burning topic. The demand that Hindi should be the official language in Hindi provinces in North India and English should continue in non-Hindi States till these States themselves want Hindi has now developed into making all the regional languages official languages with Hindi as a compulsory language with perhaps English too as a compulsory language.



There is too much of amateur thinking going on in high quarters. It almost appears as if our struggle against the British was for the upliftment of regional languages and not for the unity of India. This makes mincemeat of the unity of the Nation which the Preamble to our Constitution emphasises. The language question is now in a melting pot and it is difficult to say what the ultimate solution will be: whether we shall be able to maintain the unity of India or sink back into the political balkanisation of the eighteenth century. A little clear and honest thinking at the time of our Constitution making would have gone far to avoid the present impasses which may be a forerunner of political and social chaos when no Indian will be able to converse with another without an interpreter.

The fundamental principles and the directives have been a fruitful source of litigation sometimes even of a very frivolous type.

The Constitution proceeds on orthodox British lines. The legislature consists of two houses: Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Rajya Sabha originally was called the Council of States as its members are elected by the legislatures of States. Ordinarily it might be expected to function as a good brake on any hasty or ill-conceived legislation. In theory both Houses are equal in status and privileges. But with the steam roller majorities enjoyed by the Congress Party both in the State legislatures and the Central legislature, the Rajya Sabha tends to develop an inferiority complex so much so that several leading members of Rajya Sabha prefer to get elected to the Lok Sabha. Each house is ultra-conscious of its own status and privileges, plainly reminiscent of the old tussles between the House of Commons and the House of Lords in Britain, but without that historic background which could justify such rivalry in their Indian counter-

parts. Rajya Sabha has often been criticised as a superfluous body. There is some justification for this criticism so far as the present composition of the House is concerned, for it only reflects the majority of one party in Lok Sabha and the State Legislatures. It would be a different thing if the House were to be composed of people representing different interests: professional and commercial and administrative, cultural organisations, industrial and rural labour. Such a body of competent men of independent views would have some check on legislation proposed by the Government and passed by the Lok Sabha.

It is a tribute to the Mother of Parliaments that the numerous conventions established by the House of Commons are more or less completely accepted by the Parliament in India. Authorities like May and Anson and Dicey are freely quoted and rulings based on them. Modes of parliamentary behaviour have been followed as for example rising and bowing to the Chair when entering or leaving the House. It is so graceful and symbolises the dignity and the authority of the Chair. The procedure for passing laws is closely modelled on the British pattern in spite of the fact that the Indian Constitution is by no means as homogeneous as the British Constitution. Theoretically the Rajya Sabha is spoken of as the House of Elders. But in fact far too many young men have found their way to it to justify this description. Some time ago it was said that the average age of the Rajya Sabha members was lower than the average age of the Lok Sabha members.

It is unfortunate that with the enthusiasm of youth the Indian Parliament has been passing laws at a feverishly unhealthy rate. With infantile faith it believes that every ill on earth can be obliterated by passing a law. Prohibition and gold control orders have created more



problems than solved. The country to-day is perhaps much less moral than it ever was before. Corruption is admittedly rife and the licensing system has given it a fillip. A good beginning has been made in the field of social legislation e.g., laws dealing with prostitution, protection of children and social security generally, which has now got a full-fledged ministry. Apart from the number of laws it is notorious that they are badly drafted, necessitating numerous amendments at quick intervals. One reason for this may be that not enough time is given to draftsmen, as the ministers are too much in a hurry to pass laws. Badly drafted laws add to the work of the law courts as the need to interpret laws has increased. Very recently no less a person than Mr. C. K. Daphtary, the Attorney-General, had to say while addressing the Advocates' Association of Western India: "Laws are made and made and made" and he compares their growth to the growth of cities like Delhi and Bombay where "localities sprang up without roads and other conveniences and buildings rose to twenty floors without much space between." Even more explicit was Mr. Justice D. N. Sinha, Executive Chairman, West Bengal State Unit of the Indian Law Institute, when he said in his address on 30th June 1964 to the Association of Company Secretaries and Executives, Calcutta: "A man should be able to know in advance what his liabilities are and would be in the immediate future, so that he can prepare his own budget of living in order to conform with it. I regret to say that in this respect our legislators have signally failed us altogether. Not only are taxation laws prolix, complicated, full of unnecessary technicalities and incomprehensible to the ordinary taxpayer, but they are getting worse every day. There should be a halt somewhere. No society can go on with an indefinite rise in prices and an intolerable tax burden."

Indeed the old British pattern of income tax law should be given up. To introduce numerous, at times revolutionary, changes in the structure of a basic law passed years ago, becomes confusing in language and in law. It would be far better to have a brand new income tax law every year. It may incorporate 80 per cent of the old basic law but there would be no need to refer backward and forward. Perhaps the worst law in respect of confusion is The Company Law Act with its amendments. I am sure, few members of the Parliament understood it when it was passed. Solicitors and advocates frankly admit they find it confusing, though they make money out of this confusion. One can only hope that the draftsmen responsible for it know what it means. In this connection Mr. Justice Sinha aptly quotes from what Alexander Hamilton wrote in the *Federalist*:

“It will be of little avail to the people that the laws are made by men of their own choice, if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be grasped or so incoherent that they cannot be understood. If they can be repealed or revised before they are promulgated or undergo such incessant change, no man knows what the law is to-day and can guess what it will be to-morrow.”

Mr. Justice Sinha's own comment is enlightening: “I think, this profound remark of the American Jurist is fully applicable to company legislation in India to-day.”

It is a sad experience that the British type of democracy so willingly accepted by the new independent countries of Asia and Africa has been crumbling into dictatorships or one party rule, which is a negation of democracy in the western sense of the term. It must be said to the credit of India that the structure of demo-



cracy stands and the credit of it must go to the towering personality of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who continued to be the Prime Minister of India from the first day of Indian Independence, 15th August 1947 till the day of his death on 27th May 1964. But even the dominance of Pandit Nehru cannot blind us to the basic weaknesses of our democracy. The two party system which has made for the success of democracy in Britain and the Dominions of the old British Empire, and in the United States of America has not been in operation in India. There are far too many parties to function as an effective opposition. But the situation is much worse when the combined strength of the opposition parties is far below that of the Congress, which has been loyally subservient to the will and policies of Nehru except on the rare crucial occasions when he yielded to the pressure of groups as for example when he yielded to the appointment of the States Reorganisation Committee which has resulted in the formation of linguistic states. The power of the Congress party is quite intelligible in the light of the historic fact that it fell to its lot to bear the brunt of the struggle against Britain and lead India to Independence. The prestige of the party is immense and even to-day when one feels disappointed with the Congress governments one is constrained to vote congress or not vote at all, because there is no other party fit or ready to form a government.

There was a chance in the early years of Independence when a healthy party system could have developed. Gandhiji with his usual political acumen did not hesitate to advocate the dissolution of the Congress party after Independence. The advice was pertinent and wise, for the Congress had been founded to achieve the political progress of India. In the beginning the Indian leaders aspired only to Dominion Status within the British

Empire. But as this was not palatable under Gandhiji's lead the Congress declared nothing short of complete independence as its goal. Thanks to Hitler, who even in defeat had succeeded in weakening the British Empire and the odd facts that Churchill in spite of his great services to his country was rejected by the British electorate as prime minister and a sympathetic Labour premier was occupying 10 Downing Street, India did succeed in getting independence in 1947. The country was jubilant and felt grateful to Gandhiji and his lieutenants like Nehru and Patel. In the British days all Indians had but one objective: driving the British out of India and questions of policy had no place at all. Indians were united. No Indian politician of any party did not have his political tutelage in the Congress, though later he may have drifted away from the parent body. Gandhiji like a true democrat was courageous enough to declare that the Congress had done its work and so it should now be dissolved. It was a very sage advice, for then the heterogeneous elements would have sorted themselves out and Indian democracy might have started with a stable party system. But the other leaders anxious to be in power knew the magic effect of the very word *Congress* on the electorate and preferred to go to the polls with Congress slogans and naturally came out with a majority of a steam-roller type and they have had it for all the subsequent years and will have it for some more years to come. For people even when dissatisfied with the Congress policies ask plaintively: If not Congress, which other party? And indeed there is no other party to take its place. The Congress party, however, has been thriving on its old reputation. It can hardly be said to be a party in the genuine sense that democracy requires. With the flood gates of power and position open to them, the Congress party is a mosaic of all sorts



of people. It contains capitalists. It contains socialists, it contains Hindu Mahasabhaites, it contains socialists of varied brands and even communists. With these heterogeneous elements how does the Congress party function in the democratic set-up? The answer is simple: the hypnotic personality of Pandit Nehru has held the party together. He had definitely socialistic sympathies and had even a tinge of communism in his mental make-up, but he was predominantly a lover of freedom, which made him a champion of parliamentary democracy as against the communistic totalitarianism with its emphasis on force. The result has been that democracy in India has the structure of democracy, but in practice it has been a benevolent dictatorship of one man with an obedient party to accept his will and an electorate willing to accept his authority and within the Parliament party discipline and party whips have made it possible for even revolutionary measures to be passed by thumping majorities. The Opposition has been given full freedom to criticise but all the combined opposition parties with a sprinkling of Independents come to just a flea bite. The Opposition parties can be as critical of one another as of the Congress party. The Communists on the whole have been a friendly opposition except that since the Chinese invasion of India many Communists now styled as the Leftist Communists are in open sympathy with the Chinese and most of them have had to be behind prison bars. The Socialists have lost their *raison d'être* after the Congress's acceptance of the Socialistic pattern of society, though it is anybody's guess as to what it means. The real opposition comes from the communalists, but they represent a lost cause and can really have no place in democratic India. Put all these facts together and the net result is that the image of Nehru emerges as a colossus. The question does arise: do we have a democracy or a Fascist

one-party rule? If Gandhiji's advice had been accepted, democracy would have had a chance to habilitate itself with parties more or less evenly divided on basic principles.

Though it sounds very heterodox, many feel that it was a tragic mistake to have begun with adult franchise in India when in spite of the directive of the Constitution nearly 75 per cent are illiterate and even of the literate 25 per cent a vast majority can hardly be said to be educated. A vast ignorant electorate makes elections extremely costly. A friend of mine had to spend twenty thousand rupees to get a seat in the Lok Sabha. More recently a leader of an opposition party confessed that to win a seat in the Lok Sabha requires a lakh of rupees. Where does this money come from? Party funds mostly, but even this cannot go the whole way. If a candidate himself has to invest a large amount in his election there is the temptation to make up for this by hook or crook.

The fact that Indian democracy rests on a written constitution gives a certain stability to it. But when the highest judiciary has given its verdict against the government, the government finds it easy with its steam-roller majority to pass fresh legislation nullifying judicial decisions. Even the Constitution in spite of the required two-thirds majority can be changed easily and it has been so changed much too frequently in the short space of seventeen years. The Judiciary in India is as strong as the Judiciary in U.S.A. but is weak in the face of one party rule.

While surveying the infant democracy in India one is reminded of a pertinent joke. A son asks his father the meaning of a politician and the answer is: "It is very simple, son. He is a genius supposed to help us out of difficulties we never had before." But with all its faults we can say with pride that India is the only colonial



country which has been able to sustain parliamentary democracy. Time is on her side. As the prestige of the Congress party diminishes and principles come to count for more than personal loyalties, Indian democracy may still emerge in full glory as a worthy pupil of Britain.

It now remains to consider the position of the President in the Indian Constitution. The name reminds one of the President of U.S.A. but the position actually assigned to him is of a powerless British monarch. The result is rather unsatisfactory. Our constitution makers were influenced most by the British Constitution, but in Indian conditions there could be no monarch and inevitably an elected President had to be provided for. But he was looked upon as a constitutional figure head like the British monarch. Unfortunately an elected president of an infant republic, though of a gigantic size cannot possibly have the halo of royalty and long historic traditions that surround the head of a British monarch. Nor has he been given the gigantic powers of an American President. The President of India is just the first citizen of India, an august representative of his country. Apart from his honoured position he can have only that prestige which his own personality can command. Thus our first President Dr. Rajendra Prasad was hardly known outside India, but he commanded the respect of his countrymen because of his great services in the freedom struggle and as President of the Constituent Assembly. His unassuming nature and modesty made him willingly submit to the policies of the government of the day. In the long course of ten years he is reputed to have asserted himself only twice: once on the question of Hindu Code Bill on which he wanted an appeal to the country and the second one was on a comparatively minor question relating to his right on a religious ques-

tion. The present President, Dr. Radhakrishnan, had kept himself studiously out of the roughs and tumbles of freedom struggle, but his world wide reputation as a philosopher at least among the elite of all nations, and his oratory and known patriotism made it possible for him to succeed Dr. Rajendra Prasad as the second president of India. In his discerning study of Pandit Nehru Mr. Frank Moraes has but one reference to Dr. Radhakrishnan who was Vice-President at the time. It is stated that Pandit Nehru consulted Dr. Radhakrishnan only when he was sure of getting the advice he wanted. This implies that Dr. Radhakrishnan could not give expression to his views independently. It also implies that Dr. Radhakrishnan would not go out of his way to give his advice when it was not asked for. As President he is reputed to have asserted himself on the critical occasion of the Chinese invasion, which made many Congress leaders and the public at large demand certain changes in the Cabinet.

Whatever be the position as it has come to be, it is an open question whether the Indian Constitution really provides only for a powerless and colourless president. Dr. Rajendra Prasad himself had doubts and once when speaking at a function of the Institute of Public Administration he did suggest the need to undertake a research into the exact position and powers of the President of India. But the Prime Minister of the day put his foot down against the need of any such research. This, however, has not prevented many from arguing whether the American Constitution would not suit India better than the British Constitution. So revered, though heterodox, a leader as Rajaji has expressed himself in favour of vesting the President with more powers. Jurists can certainly argue that the language of the Constitution makes it possible for the President to have a real voice



in the affairs of the country. In a crisis the question may assume an importance that it does not seem to have at the moment.

The status and powers of the Governors of the States as the representatives of the President, reflect the powerlessness of the President himself. In British days the Governors had a position and powers which made them centres of authority. This is no more so at the present day. Governors are just figure heads enjoying a certain pomp and pageant. They are mostly seen at foundation-stone laying ceremonies or at the opening of buildings, important and unimportant. They inaugurate conferences. Only when the President's rule has had to be imposed, as for example in Orissa or Kerala, the Governor has some real power and authority, though even here he has to act under the instructions of the Central Government. No wonder if the question has been raised whether Governors should continue since all the power and limelight have gone to the Chief Ministers. No wonder too that the office has become a dumping ground for politicians whose influence in their own state is found to be irksome or as a reward for past services when defeated at the polls. Constitutionally whether in Western democracies or Communist countries the Governors do have an important part to play and a clever and active governor can play a useful part in evolving a healthy democracy and maintaining high standards of administration.

## RUSSIA

Communists are fond of looking upon their political organisations as democratic. This claim is totally unjustified, if by democracy we mean parliamentary government, because the communists recognise only one party,

their own, and all other parties are banned. It cannot be spoken of as democracy even in the Lincolnian sense, because non-communists are not included among people. But after all non-communists are liquidated as millions of them have been, whether in Russia or China, and the people who remain are only communists, it may be that Lincolnian democracy may be attained in the sense that government will be of the people, for the people but it is doubtful if it will ever be by the people, for the communist party organisation is so rigidly controlled from the top that some type of dictatorship becomes almost inevitable. Whether politically communism can be spoken of as democracy or not, economically and socially it has come to have an appeal for the masses as a new gospel of equality and security, even though freedom may not figure in the list of its ultimate values.

The word *soviet* has come to have the same central position in communism that the word *parliament*. Originally in Russian it meant a council of any kind elected by the people. With the introduction of communism it has come to mean a council elected by working people with an emphasis on peasants as rural workers and industrial workers, with a few select intelligentsia at the top as the controlling brains of the party.

There are certain basic principles underlying communist political philosophy. First of all it emphasises a free development of nationalities. This was necessitated by the political conditions of Russia. Czarist Russia was a far-flung empire made up of numerous distinct nations and their importance had to be recognised if they were to be won over to the communist fold. Recognition of different nationalities carried with it a recognition of the importance of national languages. Theoretically nations are given the right to choose their own form of national organisation. With the establish-



ment of communist party organisations in every nook and corner of Russia in practice this freedom was restricted to the communist party organisations. This new communist empire was so organised as to give chief authority to the soviets in Moscow so that along with the development of national languages went a compulsory study of Russian. In its origin whether in Marx and Engels or Lenin, communism was meant to be international, but the actual development of communism has tended to be more nationalistic under Stalin and Mao-tse-Tung, but the aim of having an international communism has never been given up. So in the background of communism there always lies the ideal of proletarian internationalism, which has meant friendship and fraternalisation in the interests of working classes all over the world. In the beginning of Russian Revolution, it was feared that no communist country could survive if surrounded on all sides by capitalistic countries. Therefore there was a desire to foment communist risings in all countries. When no capitalist country responded to this call, Russia was content to develop her own nationalistic communism with a desire to foment communist pockets in every country so that at a given opportunity they can work as spear-heads of communist revolutions. China has proved to be the most apt pupil in this respect, spreading its tentacles into Korea and Vietnam and Indonesia, financing communist parties in every country possible with an eye to the future. That is why Communist countries vie with democratic countries. If Russia finds it diplomatically wise to accept co-existence for the time being, China with the zest of a new convert still stands for a militant communist empire with China at the apex.

The growth of Russia to the heights of power in every field is a fascinating study of importance to India, for Russian Revolution began under conditions markedly

similar to conditions in India. Both were lands of villages with agriculture as the predominant industry. Both were intensely religious, bordering on the superstitious. Both were highly illiterate with an active intelligentsia at the top. Within half a century Russia has come to the top of the world, surpassing the British Empire which was leading at the beginning of the century. Illiteracy has been wiped off. Industries have developed to dizzy heights. In technology, if Russia has not beaten U.S.A. she is hardly inferior. In military prowess U.S.A. seems to be at the top, but what surprises Russia can spring from behind her Iron Curtain is anybody's guess. In the light of Russia's marvellous achievements a study of her political organisation, however brief, becomes of importance, because all her military and economic and cultural development has become possible only because of the protecting cover of her political organisation. It is extremely complex, which few can understand outside Russia.

Russian communists had to come to terms with the numerous nationalities inherited from Czarist Russia. The Constitution recognises four forms of national states:

1. Union Republics: "Each Union Republic is a national Soviet Socialist State of workers and peasants, which voluntarily forms a direct constituent part of the Soviet Union on the basis of equality with all the other Union Republics" (V. Karpinsky *The Social and State Structure of the U.S.S.R.*, p. 71). It has its own constitution, its own language, its own laws. It has control over its territory and its own troops. It can enter into direct relations with foreign states. It is stated that two Union Republics, the Ukrainian and the Byelorussian, were invited to attend the Conference at San Francisco which



led to the birth of United Nations. This was in conformity with the invitations extended to all British Dominions and even India before her Independence. It is to be noted that the Russian as the language of the U.S.S.R. has to be studied and all laws passed by U.S.S.R. get precedence over the laws passed by the Union Republics. It has to be noted that each such republic is given the right to secede, but it is questionable whether this right could ever be exercised in the face of the all-powerful federal government.

2. Autonomous Republics comprise minorities within a republic e.g., the Komis. There are as many as seventeen such republics.

3. Autonomous Regions comprise numerically small national groups, e.g., the Adygei Autonomous Region, Jewish Autonomous Region, etc.

4. National Areas comprise still smaller groups having a distinct nationality of their own.

These details are hardly known to the outside world, but these varying types of states are a fine example of the Russian bid to hold these numerous heterogeneous groups, big and small, within the strong central structure of federal government in Moscow.

Important as these national organisations are, they work on a lower plane and within narrow national limits. What makes Russia so powerful in the world to-day is the central government in Moscow. The structure of soviets rises in the form of a pyramid with the small soviets in villages at the base and the Supreme Soviet of U.S.S.R. at the apex. It consists of two chambers on the orthodox democratic model. The first chamber is the Soviet of the Union, consisting of one deputy for every 300,000 of the population. The second chamber is the Soviet of Nationalities, consisting of 25 deputies from each Union Republic, eleven deputies from each of the

Autonomous Republics; five deputies from each of the Autonomous Regions and one deputy from each of the National Areas. Considering that Russia is multinational the existence of the second chamber as representative of nationalities is fully justifiable.

The deputies at all levels are elected to the soviets. But the right of voting is confined to all public organisations and societies of the working people, trade unions, co-operative societies, youth organisations, and cultural societies. Workers vote through their own establishments as for example army units, peasants on collective farms, villages, employees of state farms. In the early years of Russian Revolution vast masses of people were practically disfranchised, e.g., the aristocratic families of the Czarist regime, the kulaks or peasant proprietors, and in short all who had not joined the Communist party. In the course of time these disfranchised people were literally liquidated: killed outright as enemies of the people or exiled to Siberia, and millions were so oppressed that they preferred to bid good-bye to their homes and hearths and begin life anew in European or American countries. Dukes may have taken to taxi-driving and duchesses may have become receptionists. In fact anything was good enough to keep body and soul together. After half a century Russia may claim to be more or less homogeneous in the matter of political convictions. Dissidents there are bound to be but they are cowed down, they live in an atmosphere of fear where a father cannot trust his son or a brother.

✓ It must also be noted that the elections are not free. Candidates are selected so that the number of candidates is the same as the number of vacancies. So all elections are unanimous. Lord Attlee with a fine sense of humour compared elections in Russia to horse racing in which one horse only is allowed to run.



On the administrative side there is the Council of Ministers elected at a joint session of the two chambers. They have the usual responsibilities of maintaining public order, protecting the interests of the State, safeguarding the rights of citizens, fixing the annual contingent of citizens to be called up for military service, directing the general organisation of the armed forces of the Soviet Union, giving general guidance in the sphere of foreign relations.

Over and above this Council of Ministers is the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of U.S.S.R. It consists of a President, sixteen vice-presidents, a secretary and fifteen members. They are elected at a joint session of the two chambers. Its importance arises from the fact that while the government of the U.S.S.R. is responsible and accountable to the Supreme Soviet which elected it, in the interval between sessions the government is responsible and accountable to the Presidium. This is borne out by the fact that it has the power to annul the decisions of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. and of Union Republics, if they do not conform to law.

The judiciary is of a peculiar type, conforming more to the ancient Athenian type than to western democracies, where judges are appointed permanently and cannot be removed except for proved inefficiency or corruption. In Russia all judges are elected and are removable and so *prima facie* they are subject to shifting public opinion and political pressures.

While the Constitution of U.S.S.R. is very complex and conforms to the usual pattern of governments, in actual practice it works out as totalitarian in character. Lenin was a genius and creator of Communist Russia. After him the power passed into the hands of Stalin, who was a brilliant but ruthless organiser, but only after he had succeeded in liquidating all possible rivals, espe-

cially the great and brilliant military genius, Trotsky. Stalin's rule was long but marked by several bloody purges. Elections were there and candidates were selected but slightest deviations from the policies of Stalin were looked upon as dangerous. Such candidates were kept out, if not liquidated. Czarist Russia had developed a strong police and an espionage system of ruthless efficiency. Communist Russia has kept up these institutions and improved upon them by instilling the young with communism and using them against their own fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters and friends. It is notorious that such a system makes people live in continuous dread of their freedom and life. In Stalin's time no foreigner could move about as freely as he would have liked to. There is an interesting story of a group of tourists in a Black Sea port, chaperoned by a guide. One member of the group kept continuously straying away and the guide had to bring him back to the group under various polite pretexts. Finally when these did not prevail, he had to say in a rueful voice that if the member did not keep in the group, he (the guide) would have to lose his job and even be punished. An Indian student who went to Russia as the leader of a students' delegation, told me that he found the atmosphere stifling and that it was only in Paris after a month that he could breathe freely. But perhaps the most telling story is reputed to come from Khrushchev himself. He had been a good lieutenant of Stalin and this must have helped him to get into Stalin's shoes after his death. By temperament he is very jovial and humane, changing the atmosphere for the better. It was bold of him to debunk the prestige of Stalin. When he was doing this at a lecture, somebody in the audience had the courage to ask why he had not spoken like this during Stalin's life time.



Khrushchev naively asked who had put the question. Nobody had the courage to get up and answer. Khrushchev quietly said: That is the reason. *Prima facie* it seems strange that people should be willing to live in this torturing atmosphere of fear. But even majorities can be kept down by a strong and militant minority. When a generation brought up in communist philosophy comes up and becomes a majority it is all the more easy to keep down any minority, even though it contain a genius like Pasternack. The fact remains that communism has had a very successful appeal for millions. It has become a new religion which has been accepted by many intellectual people who are prepared to uphold it at any cost. Sir Winston Churchill records in one of his essays how President Roosevelt tried to argue Marshal Zukhov out of his communism but failed. Communism has become a philosophy and a way of life with millions. It may not and does not conform to the western idea of democracy but they do speak of it as, and think it is, democracy. Whitehead was right when he wrote: "We English and Americans are singularly unimaginative in our interpretations of the term 'democracy,' we seem unable to admit under our definition any form of society which does not conform closely to our own." If communism means ultimately the well-being of people, it has a right to be called democracy. It recognises the right of every human being to work, rest, and leisure. He is educated, all his needs are looked after and these include the education of his wife and children, subject only to one condition that he who does not work neither shall he eat. He may not be given the work he wants, but work he will be given with the right to all the benefits that a communist society offers.

Einstein had the insight to see that the appeal of Communism was for the hungry. Most people prefer security

to freedom, for freedom can have no meaning for men and women with empty stomachs. It can have no appeal for men with vision, for men who know that freedom is at the root of all the greatness that humanity can achieve. The miraculous achievements of Russians in science and technology seem to belie this assertion, but there is a reason for this. Scientists have no politics and they are paid so well by their Russian masters in spite of all theoretical equality of income, that they are content to do their work at their best. From them Russia has benefited but so has the world. Science is above politics and can be allowed to have a free hand. But with literature and philosophy it is different. They touch life in all its rawness and their teachings can move people to revolution. It follows that they could not have freedom to express themselves. They have to write and think within the four walls of communist theory. But man is greater than theories. With more settled conditions the spirit of man is bound to assert itself and so it has even in Russia. Khrushchev, while orthodox in his tenacity for the communist doctrine and its claims as the only salvation for the toiling masses of the world, brought to Russian politics more of humaneness, a spirit of liberalism, a sense of humour and a will to benefit from the experience of others, even if the others be the hated Americans. Khrushchev has fallen. So far it has produced no untoward consequences. Khrushchev is still allowed to live unlike the days of Stalinist purges. It is significant that Pasternack could write a classic distasteful to Russian dictators and that his classic novel *Dr. Zhivago* has not been published in Russia but translations have appeared in French and English and Italian and even in its foreign garb was adjudged worthy of a Nobel Prize. Though he was not allowed to accept the prize, it is significant that he is alive, a phenomenon which could not



have been possible in the stern days of Stalin. It is still more significant that a Russian woman, Miss Evgenia Popova, has the courage to come out with such heterodox views as that the labourers in U.S.A. are not oppressed or that all government legislation is not dictated by the barons of Wall Street. It is a hopeful sign that truth can see the light of day. The world is living to-day in mortal terror of nuclear warfare, but it is a hopeful sign that there are possibilities of America and Russia understanding each other, for only understanding can lead to peace.

In the light of the prevailing dictatorial regime in Russia it would be *prima facie* difficult to accept that democracy lives in Russia. The welfare of the toiling masses may be the aim and this aim may be lived up to, but where freedom is afraid to show its face and men must express their innermost thoughts in whispers and only in select company, democracy in its real sense can hardly be said to exist in Russia. There is a point in the pungent remark of a critic that in every communist country there are only two parties: one in power and the other in jail.

### CRITIQUE OF DEMOCRACY

I have tried to present an account of the best known democracies in as objective a fashion as possible, even if it has not been possible for me to conceal my own partiality for Western democracy. Even while admitting this partiality I shall be frank enough to admit that I am old-fashioned enough to admire in the good company of Plato and Aristotle royalty as the best form of government. Every country has had its good king and he is remembered with gratitude. Unfortunately great and good kings are rare for Lord Acton's axiomatic dictum

applies more easily to kings than to others that power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely. That is why under modern conditions with an educated and self-conscious electorate democracy with all its faults is best suited. The faults are obvious and they could be briefly recounted:

1. Under the best of conditions voting does not establish that the majority really want a particular government. In the best of electorates as many as fifty per cent may not vote and any majority of the remaining fifty per cent or more cannot be said to be a real majority. In single member constituencies there is no guarantee that the seats won in the Parliament represent a proportionate number of voters of a party in the country at large. Theoretically proportional representation gives a more correct picture of the voting strength of the different parties. Moreover in its very balance it will produce such small majorities that a stable government becomes difficult, if not impossible. That is why so confirmed a democrat as Sir Winston Churchill did not want it for England.

2. The cost of elections has become prohibitive. I may repeat, what I have said before. Some six years ago a friend who won a seat in the Lok Sabha told me that he had to spend Rupees Twenty Thousand apart from the aid that might have been given to him from party funds. Last year a leader of a party in the Parliament told me that a seat in the Lok Sabha would cost nothing less than a lakh of rupees. It means that only people with means can venture to go in for an election, unless party funds are mostly depended upon. It was only this that enabled the Labour party to be built up in England. In backward countries where trade unions are still to be built up in a unified coherent fashion the cause of the poor is still at the mercy of the rich, who can finance their



own candidates. Where so much money is spent there is also a desire to get it back in the form of patronage, which means corruption in public life and in administration.

3. Even in countries where democracy is well established and many good and able people take to politics, there is a certain prejudice against politicians as adventurers. A politician's promises are not to be taken at their face value. The result is that best people tend to keep out of politics. James Bryce, the noted historian of U.S.A. politics noted in the eighties of the last century that it was not easy to get the best men to stand up for the presidency. But in this century there is no room for this complaint as some of the most towering men of our generation stood for election and distinguished themselves as Presidents of U.S.A.: Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt and Kennedy. In England best men are drawn to politics. In developing countries which have struggled their way to independence the position has yet to stabilise itself. Politicians have a prestige out of all proportion to their merits and honest men keep out or are pushed out of public life.

4. While it is assumed that voters know their own mind and will vote accordingly, it is notorious that votes can be bought and sold. This is a reflection on the political integrity of people and casts a doubt on the representative character of elections.

5. Every democracy has accepted the principle of one man one vote. In practice it means that a miner is as good as a graduate or even a genius like Einstein.

If in spite of all these patent defects democracy has succeeded, it is because in practice every democracy functions as an aristocracy of wealth and/or intelligence. In a good democracy, however uneducated and ignorant the voters may be, somehow normally good intelligent people

are elected as members of Parliament and they in their turn elect the best men available as their leaders. These leaders constitute the Government. Sir Winston Churchill was proud of describing himself as the servant of the people and looked upon his membership of the House of Commons with undisguised pride, and yet as far back as 1909 on the very threshold of his political career he knew the limits of the House of Commons when he defined democracy as "the occasional necessity of deferring to the opinions of other people." He was the saviour of England only because he had the freedom to take far-reaching decisions without consulting the Parliament and kept up her spirit by his soul-stirring eloquence. The vitality of English democracy is shown by the fact that after the greatest victory in the History of England the victor was ousted out of power, when in other countries he might have been made prime minister for life.

If democracy of the western type has flourished in spite of its defects, democracy of the Russian or communist type has also its votaries in millions. It is accepted by them as a new faith, a new religion. It stands for the rebirth of humanity. With the zeal of a new born faith they do not mind if freedom is denied to all who are not with them, they do not mind if hundreds of thousands are shot or exiled. They look upon it as the price to pay for rehabilitating the working men in every sphere of life. They deny freedom, but promise security. So *prima facie* to choose the democracy of the western or Russian type is to choose between freedom and security. It is a hard choice, but freedom has always made for the progress of mankind and so in the long run it may win the battle. So the choice lies between the freedom to develop and security to live. It is also pertinent to inquire what type of society each of these democracies offers and this can form a theme of succeeding lectures.



## 4

### SOCIETY AND STATE

#### *Philosophy of Society*

THE PREDOMINANT civilisation of to-day is European and European civilisation has been so individualistic that the world to-day is most conscious of the rights of individuals. But no individual can live by himself. He is always a member of some society or community, big or small, so that an individual by himself is a mere abstraction. He is born in a society and gets his sustenance from that society. He gets so used to its ethos that he takes it for granted that it must be the best and nothing can be right which his own ethos looks upon as taboo. This applies to civilised societies as well and is the basis of human conservatism. Family constitutes the unit of every society, though in course of time it gets merged in larger groups: tribal or political. In oriental civilisations like Hindu and Chinese the institution of the family has had a more abiding place than in the more adventurous and individualistic civilisations of the West. The Hindu joint family and caste system are outgrowths of the basic family. In Confucian social philosophy the family was the centre round which the whole Chinese civilisation revolved until the advent of communism in recent years. In Europe the tribal organisation continued long after the birth of the city state in ancient Greece. The Greek civilisation, however, gave its stamp to all future deve-

lopment of European culture and the State came to be looked upon as the highest type of society, controlling every phase of social activities. The absolute authority of the State has conquered the whole world and whether in democracy or communism the power of the State is supreme.

The Greek philosophers at their best as in Plato and Aristotle stuck fast to the ideal of the city state as the highest culmination of human society. This is all the more noteworthy as they were not unaware of the existence of powerful kingdoms and empires like Egypt and Persia. But with remarkable consistency they looked upon these bloated country states with contempt and dismissed them as barbarian for they had no conception of freedom. But they were blind to an inner inconsistency in their own city states, for they looked upon slavery as a natural institution on the ground that some are born to rule like the Greeks while others were just fit to be slaves and they comprised the whole non-Greek world. Even Engels was constrained to admit that slavery was a justifiable phase in the growth of human history. All the great achievements of the ancient civilisations like Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian and Chinese were the results of slave labour. Greek civilisation itself with its achievements of political democracy, arts and literature science and philosophy were made possible by all the routine humdrum work of life being left to the slaves, while the free citizens had the requisite leisure to devote themselves to politics or arts or philosophy. The problems of an increasing population were solved by the Greeks not by conquering their neighbours, but by sending out their surplus population to found other city states. So imperialism took the form of colonialism and the shores of the Mediterranean were dotted with Greek colonies as city states. It was only under Alexander that



Greek imperialism spread eastwards, but Alexander though tutored by Aristotle was a barbarian by birth. Destiny chose him as the instrument to spread Greek culture. It was a lucky accident, as history goes, that Greece was easily conquered by the Romans who themselves were willing to be conquered by the greatness of Greek culture. So Greek culture spread westwards and took in the whole of western Europe. The Romans unlike the Greeks were born imperialists. Their legal and military genius gave a new stamp to Greek culture and gave birth to Graeco-Roman culture which has been the basis of all Western culture which has now finally come to dominate the whole world.

Rome started as a city state but developed into a vast empire. They were remorseless conquerors but they could legitimately take pride that they civilised the whole of Europe. The Roman Empire at its zenith also saw the birth of Christianity, which was to challenge its might. With the decline and fall of the Roman Empire came feudal Europe with the Holy Roman Empire, which was neither holy nor Roman nor perhaps even an empire, and the temporal-spiritual autocracy of infallible Popes at Rome. Between the two there grew up a tradition of absolutism, which continued to flourish till national states like England and France and Spain and Portugal came to the forefront.

The Greeks very wisely looked upon man as a social animal and were not bothered by the question how human society originated. But thinkers of the post-Renaissance period chafed under the autocracy of kings and emperors and were fascinated by memories of freedom in ancient Greece and Rome. They began to ask: how did human society originate? Hobbes gave his answer in his *Leviathan*. Originally there was no society and men lived in the state of nature. There was no

law and order. Each man's hand was against others. The result was the life of man "nasty, brutish and short." In their own interest they thought it best to come together and enter into a social contract whereby each one gave up his right to freedom and agreed to obey a sovereign to make sure of their security. Thus began society. Hobbes was all for absolutism in politics, but this absolutism was rooted in the people's own will as against the divine right to rule, as claimed by the kings of England and monarchists. This was a step towards the rule of the people and was democratic to this extent. With the execution of Charles I and expulsion of James II, the divine right theory died a natural death. The English Revolution started the rule of Parliament in England. It required a philosopher to justify it and John Locke filled the role with his *Essay on Civil Government*. He too started with the state of nature. He did not paint it so luridly as Hobbes had done. He recognised it as a state of inconvenience as there was no one to settle points of dispute. So people in the state of nature came together and entered into a social contract. The terms were the same as in Hobbes with one marked difference that if the sovereign was unable to protect the people they were at liberty to elect a new sovereign. This was why Charles I could be executed and his son driven away from the throne.

England had rediscovered democracy to suit a country state, but the Continent of Europe and the rest of the world were still in the grip of absolutism. Louis XIV's *L'état c'est moi* was a blatant challenge and it was taken up by Rousseau, who began his *Social Contract* with the revolutionary sentence "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains." Unlike Hobbes and Locke he pictured the state of nature in terms of freedom and equality and he even pictured the noble savage with



nostalgic feelings. He saw the end of absolutism only in terms of a new social contract whereby men could establish a society based on freedom and equality. Though his actual teaching was not so revolutionary as his opening sentence it started off a train of thought which had its end in the French Revolution which burst with the cry of liberty, equality and fraternity.

The whole concept of Social Contract had no historical basis. It emanated only from the brains of thinkers. It did not take subsequent thinkers long to expose its fanciful character and to tear it to pieces as a philosophical theory, but it was useful in establishing the three most cherished rights of men: the right to life, liberty and property. The first two have never been challenged in theory, though in practice it has been openly flouted by dictators like Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. The last right is fundamental to western democracy, but it has been repudiated by Communists.

Modern political thought has gone back to the old Greek idea that man is a social animal and so there can be no question as to how or when society came into existence. Darwin has made the question of the origin of man and society biological. Family, however accidental in its origin, marked the beginning of social life. In the course of millenia family has passed through various phases of expansion: clan, tribe, gens, caste. For millenia men might have lived as nomads till the discovery of agriculture made it possible for a stable life in one area. All this is in the province of Anthropology. We come to the political phase when tribes or groups, however called, joined together and the city state came into being.

We have already dealt with the Greek city states. We may briefly sum up its essential features:

1. They were monarchic to begin with, but monarchy easily lapsed into tyranny so that democracy came to be established under the leadership of Pericles. Democracy, even though consisting of free citizens was liable to lapse into mobocracy as illustrated in the case of Aristides the Just. Plato and Aristotle took no pains to disguise their aversion to the rule of the masses and to look upon monarchy, as distinguished from tyranny, as the best type of government.
2. Under the pressure of rising numbers new colonies had to be established and so new city states came into existence.
3. City states were intrinsically weak as military states, and though by a temporary union they were able to beat off the Persians, they were unable to resist the might of Philip of Macedon and of his great son, Alexander, and later still of the Romans.
4. The philosophy of city states made it necessary to keep the population at a low level. So infanticide of weak and deformed children was practised by the Spartans especially. Homosexuality was not looked down upon as unnatural, as it served to limit births.

Rome as a city state had a remarkable history. Militant and ambitious, the Romans had no regard for the rights of their neighbours and began expanding the boundaries of Rome till ultimately they synchronised with the whole of Italy. After abolishing monarchy or rather tyranny the Roman Constitution adopted a democratic constitution. Afraid of the authority of one man they provided for two consuls, each with the power to veto the actions of the other. The elections were annual so as to prevent the growth of vested interests. The legislative powers were in the hands of two bodies: Comitia Curiata and Comitia Centuriata. They were patrician in their com-



position. In the course of time as the pressure of the Plebeians increased and their political demands had to be met, the Concilium Plebis came into being as the third legislative body and the office of the Tribune of the Plebeians was also created. How such a conglomeration of bodies and officers worked and worked so successfully remains a miracle of history. It could be explained only in terms of Roman character: stern and sturdy, intensely patriotic, and with a remarkable sense of compromise. In times of crises they had recourse to dictatorship, which had all the advantages of unified and concerted action. Rome had become great and the Roman Republic the greatest power in the Mediterranean world. But power and wealth had begun to corrode Roman character. Ambitious satraps with military cohorts at their back aimed at power and civil wars between Sulla and Marius, Caesar and Pompey served to toll the knell of Roman Republic. As a last desperate effort to save the Republic, Caesar was killed by his own trusted friend, Brutus. But *Zeit-Geist* was against the Republic and it had to become an empire under Augustus. The Revolution was complete but it was typically Roman and constitutional. The Republic worked under a plethora of officers, each controlling the others. All these offices had just to be conferred on one man to vest him with all the powers. The transition was comparatively smooth. The Emperor, the commander-in-chief, became the Emperor. Roman Empire continued to flourish for some centuries in spite of Nero's cruelty and Messalina's scandals. It was still a matter of pride for a Roman to say: I am a Roman citizen. Roman citizenship was not confined to Rome in the narrow sense of the term. It comprised all the citizens of the far-flung empire. It carried no political power but it carried prestige. When the Empire fell, as it had to because of its chronic decay, Rome was saved

by the Pope as the Bishop of Rome. The fragments of the Empire developed into feudal states, which in their turn developed into nation states.

After the discovery of America some of the more advantageously placed nations grew into large colonial empires. A kindly destiny brought India under Britain. Economic and political exploitation was inevitable, but there were advantages too. The conservatism of India and China and of the Islamic states was rudely shaken out of its stupor. New ideas, new ambitions, a new patriotism came into being. Germany with her landlocked position had lagged behind in the colonial race and was jealous of others. She twice unleashed the forces of war and was beaten badly but not before she had weakened the foundations of the British Empire. It facilitated the revolt, violent or non-violent, of conquered countries and Britain had the good sense to bow to the inevitable end of her mighty empire. The fall of Germany and of the British Empire brought to the front two new powers: the United States of America and the United States of Soviet Republics with rival ideologies.

In this great panorama of human history one cannot but see the play of certain forces, which explain alike the tragedies and triumphs of conquests. Human infancy is so prolonged that it requires a mother's constant care for years. She is the real parent, for maternity can never be doubted, though paternity can be. It is not difficult to imagine that in the early life of human beings births were a matter of chance and promiscuity may have been the order of the day. The long gap between conception and birth left the father unknown. In fact even to-day there is a community which is ignorant of the role of sex. For example the "Melanesian natives of the Trobrian Islands, north-east of Papua, believe that that a woman bears a child because a spirit (baloma) wishes



to be reincarnated. . . . No father is needed. The Trobrianders do not believe in fatherhood." Lady Richmond Brown's *Unknown Tribes and Uncharted Seas* is a fascinating record of unbelievable facts of tribal life. No wonder that the earlier family was of a matriarchal character, leaving the father out of picture. A child's first needs are warmth and security and both are amply to be found in the mother's loving arms. Polyandrous families are by no means unknown even to-day in almost all parts of the world. We had the Nairs in Malabar in India with their matriarchal families till they were abolished by the Hindu Marriage Act of 1956. I have come across Nairs who do not welcome this reform. Some thirty years ago a learned Nair professor naively asked why a husband should have any right to his wife's property. It is impossible to say when the father's role came to be understood. It could not have been before man settled down and had a woman or some women all to himself. It is a matter of history that by the time the most ancient civilisations came to be established as in Egypt, China, India, Babylon, the patriarchal family had come to be firmly established and it has continued to be the norm in every community that calls itself civilised. It has the merit of taking off from the mother's shoulders the sole responsibility of bringing up her children and it is but morally right that the father should also have to bear his share of responsibility.

The tribal stage was marked by communism in property, as there must have been precious little to have been owned individually. A leader and a council of elders with an assembly of members to settle tribal problems were features which furnished a foundation for the post-tribal city state and petty kingdoms of warring chieftains.

It is noteworthy that the political ideal of the state

developed most on European soil because of the pressure of Graeco-Roman civilisation. That has led to the identification of state and society, for the state has become so powerful as to govern every aspect of social life. For a few centuries the Church limited the power of the State in Europe, mainly because the Church itself was a state and its temporal authority was strengthened by the spiritual halo that surrounded the Pope's head. But the growth of the nation states and more particularly the Reformation led to the decline of Pope's temporal power, till it practically became confined to a few square miles of the Vatican State in the seventies of the last century. The State reigns supreme in the West and everything else exists only under its sufferance.

What is true of the West has not been universally true of the rest of the world. A brief review of conditions in China, India and the Islamic states of middle East will not be out of place. Although Western scholars have spoken of the barbaric autocracy of oriental kings and emperors, one cannot be blind to the factors which limited this autocracy. Till the Communists came into power during the last two decades, China was governed by the social philosophy of Confucius. It exalted the family, even though polygamous, and all the virtues were built up round the family. The Emperor was at the head and was responsible for the safety of the state against foreign aggression and internal disruptive forces. He ruled with an iron hand in these fields but did not venture to interfere with the normal life of the Chinese people securely regulated by the Confucian code of morals. In fact even the royal family was not above this code and it constituted a bond of understanding between the rulers and the ruled.

In the Islamic states the teachings of the Holy Quran were the real rulers behind the autocracy of kings. The



rulers were absolute in matters of administration, especially of war and peace. As heads of Islamic states they could give a religious turn even to blatantly temporal affairs, as Pakistan has been doing even in this twentieth century. But Islam was the basis of the state.

India presents a marked contrast to the Western conception of State. Her social organisation has had a grip on the people far more than any State has had, whether Hindu, Muslim or European. Caste and joint Hindu family, institutions of hoary antiquity, and a self-governing village administration have made it possible for Hindu culture to survive waves of foreign invasions. Matthew Arnold spoke with deep insight

“ The East bowed low before the blast,  
In patient deep disdain.  
She let the legions thunder past,  
And plunged in thought again.”

This applies to the *yogis* as to the humble villagers. The king at the centre was hardly interested in the life of the villagers except for the collection of taxes. To afford security against enemies was the only responsibility that he undertook. All the rest was the work of the village panchayats and they ruled on the basis of caste and Hindu joint family. Caste is the Hindu institution par excellence. The word itself is of foreign origin: from Portuguese *casta* meaning breed or race and Latin *castus* meaning pure. The Indian equivalents are *jati* and *varna*. The origin of castes has often been discussed but it is a futile study, as its palpably economic origin has been completely swamped by historical factors in the course of centuries. The Vedas speak only of three castes: *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas*. This is the normal economic division based on functions to be found in

every society. This division was in existence in ancient Iran too, which had close cultural affinities with the Hindu Aryans of India. Iran had *Athravans* (*Brahmins*), *Rathestars* (*Kshatriyas*), and *Vastryosh* (*Vaishyas*). The last comprised the heterogeneous masses, including agriculturists and craftsmen. Avesta of ancient Iran mentions only once a fourth class: the artisans. Dr. Gilbert Slater and Stanley Rice look upon caste as Dravidian. But this can be considered to be far-fetched in the face of Vedic authority, which is far earlier than any possible Dravidian influence on the Aryans. The Dravidian influence asserted itself negatively when a fourth caste came to be grafted on the original three castes. This was the caste of the *Sudras*, purely racial in its origin as the very term *varna*, meaning colour, goes to show. The Aryans were fair and the original inhabitants of India, Dravidians and others, were dark. As a matter of purely sociological forces the conquered became the servants of the conquerors. Sex knows no barriers of colour, but racial pride kept up the distinction between the white and the dark. The dark were given an inferior status. They became agricultural workers and artisans and the *Vaishyas* came to be a superior caste comprising merchants and traders. Even in the age of the *Dharma Sastras* inter-caste marriages were not unknown, for Manu's Code has explicit references to a *Brahmin* having a *Brahmin* wife, a *Kshatriya* wife, a *Vaishya* wife and even a *Sudra* wife, though the wives too had to come within the Hindu social hierarchy.

The most pernicious off-shoot of the caste system was the caste of outcastes, the *Panchamas*. They comprised the conquered *Dasyus* who did not accept the Aryan way of life and had no recognised social relationships with the Aryans. They literally became untouchables and unapproachables as in Malabar, ostensibly because they



followed the work of sweepers and tended the hides of dead animals. Untouchability involves the forfeiture of their right to use public roads in villages and wells of drinking water. They are of the village and yet have to live outside its boundaries. Inter-marriage and inter-dining naturally are absolutely taboo. Thus by the time of the British administration untouchability had come to be looked upon by advanced Indians like Mahatma Gandhi as a blot on Hinduism. With Independence has come their emancipation from old ideas, but old ideas die hard. It has sunk so deep into the consciousness of caste Hindus that it still subsists in villages. In cities restaurants and trams and buses and railway trains have taken the edge off untouchability. Gandhiji thought he could do away with the evil by calling them Harijans and Government calls them scheduled castes. But change of names has left the evil mostly unaffected, though at the centre in New Delhi and in every state there are Harijan ministers. One of them rose to be the President of the Indian National Congress and a leader of Dr. Ambedkar's stature found a Brahmin lady to accept him as her husband. But exceptions only prove the rule in all its hideousness. Temples have been forcibly opened by the pressure of law, but they ceased to be temples to the orthodox and the reform has failed to achieve its object. The orthodox sections still forcibly prevent them from using their legal rights to roads and wells. The Government, true to the teachings of Gandhiji, have done their best but laws are useful only when they are obeyed willingly and with a sense of righteousness. How long will this state of affairs last? Only history will answer this question.

So far as inter-marriages are concerned perhaps the Muslim conquest is responsible, unconsciously of course, for tightening the rules of marriage within caste. Manu

may have advocated pre-puberty marriages of girls, but there was no legal bar to adult marriages as both Mahabharata and Ramayana go to show. The presence of foreign soldiers and the risk of women being kidnapped led the Hindus to take the precaution of marrying off their girls as early as possible, at times even before they were born, for wives enjoyed a certain respect and even sanctity among Muslims. A practice which was born as a precaution soon hardened into a religious custom and the evils of infant marriages with possibilities of infant widows and prohibition of widow marriages, even of virgin widows, added to the list of evils which called for reform. The nineteenth century was rich in the number of great reformers beginning with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and ending with Mahatma Gandhi with a host of great reformers like Ranade and Chandavarkar and Keshab Chandra Sen and Vidyasagar, to mention but a few, in between. With Independence has come sweeping reforms with full liberty to any Indian to marry any person of his or her choice. Widow remarriages do not need to be advertised as they used to be in the pre-Independence days. But caste marriages mostly hold the field and infant marriages, though illegal, are quite common especially in the villages. The spread of education and the acceptance of the democratic principles of our Constitution may lead to a gradual elimination of evils which made the cause of social reform so unpopular and the cause of social reformers so sacred.

With the growing power of foreigners in India the Hindu society in sheer self-defence had to become more and more orthodox, more and more alive to the slightest breaches of caste rules. Immorality could be tolerated but an open breach of caste rules brought on the delinquent the extreme penalty of excommunication. The excommunicated had to form sub-castes of their own and



so the four castes have ended in countless sub-castes. Within a vocation various sub-sects arose to mark extreme specialisation, e.g. the *fool malis* (flower gardeners) had to be a separate sub-caste from those who prepared threads for garlands. And so it went on *ad absurdum*. Tagore's genius high-lighted the evil in his own inimitable way: "We have divided and subdivided ourselves into mince-meat, not fit to live, but only to be swallowed. Never upto now has our disjointed society been able to ward off any threatening evil." He contrasts the example of China with her Confucian democracy and an exalted veneration for agriculturists and craftsmen. To quote Tagore again: "We are a suicidal race, ourselves keeping wide open for ages, with marvellous ingenuity, gaps that we are forbidden to cross under penalty and cracks that are considered to be too sacred to be repaired because of their antiquity."

Let it be said to the credit of Hinduism that it has produced century after century seers to rebel against the hide-bound narrowness of the caste system. Shri Krishna himself in *Bhagwad Gita* gave an ethical account of the caste system which cannot but command respect. He claimed to have created the four castes on the basis of *gunas* (qualities): *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. In every individual all three are to be found but in varying proportions. Those who have *satva* (truth or righteousness) predominant in them are the *Brahmins*. Those who have *Rajas* (activity) predominant are the *Kshatriyas*. *Vaishyas* have a mixture of all three. Those who have *tamas* (darkness or ignorance) predominant are the *Sudras*. This is an ethical classification. It follows that a *Brahmin* by birth may really be a *Sudra*, while a *Sudra* by birth may well be a *Brahmin* in the ethical sense. But in the history of caste this interpretation has been only a matter of pious theory, for in actual practice

only heredity has counted and a *Brahmin*, however immoral he be, remains a *Brahmin* worthy of worship as a superior individual, while a *Sudra*, however holy he be, remains a *Sudra* of the lowest caste. In Krishna's teaching even a *chandal* (untouchable) will be saved if he seeks refuge in Shri Krishna. But in the caste system of India there is no possibility of rising from one caste to another except after death in a future birth.

The great mystics of India in the medieval ages rose above all bonds of caste. For the time being there was a fervour, but it soon cooled down and ended as one more sub-caste as the tragic history of *Kabir Panthis* goes to show.

Our Constitution aims at a casteless and classless society. But it has not seriously affected the solidity of caste except that it leaves any individual Hindu free to defy any rule of caste without any fear of legal punishment or social ostracism. Law has paved the way for a gradual dissolution of castes, but its success will depend on how far the spirit of social legislation affects the consciousness of the masses. So caste remains aristocratic in its outlook, orthodoxically religious, anti-democratic. It is a paradox of life in India to-day that while our Constitution aims at secularism, anti-untouchability, social equality, the democratic method of voting has given a new lease of life to castes, for our democracy is still immature, political parties have yet to take root and so the masses of our illiterate voters find a safe guide in voting on the basis of caste and religion and community. Time alone will show how long these inherited legacies will continue to hold their own.

As noted before the real origin of castes is to be found in the economic division of functions. A foreigner like Meredith Townsend finds it possible to pay a glowing tribute to the caste system of India: "I firmly believe



caste to be a marvellous discovery, a form of socialism, which through ages has protected Hindu society from anarchy and from the worst evils of industrial competitive life—it is an autonomous poor law to begin with and the strongest form known of trade unions”. Hereditary skill has been passed on from generation to generation for hundreds of years.

But it remains an open question whether Indian philosophy or social thought has given due appreciation to the vocational castes as represented by the vast majority of Indian agriculturists and craftsmen. The aristocratic character of caste system has always tended to give priority to thinking and philosophising. The Upanishadic tradition still holds the field. The *Brahmins* naturally come to be held in highest respect and a few towering *Kshatriyas* like Buddha and Mahavir, the earliest to rebel against Vedic and caste orthodoxy, played their part. The *Vaishyas* achieved a position by virtue of their wealth. But the rank and file of the *Sudras* remained just hewers of wood and drawers of water. Among the *Sudras* figured the finest artists that created the artistic wealth of Hindu temples and Buddhist cave temples, the humble agriculturists, who produced food, and the toiling craftsmen who supplied the daily needs of the community. In the same caste figured prostitutes for they too were a recognised group of workers. It may be good democracy but a disparaging valuation of the most productive castes. Gandhiji made a bold attempt to overcome the aristocratic basis of caste. He looked upon all castes as of equal importance. He was right, if caste is to be looked upon as it should be. But wishful thinking cannot annihilate history and it remains true as it did in the previous centuries that caste means hierarchy with the *Brahmins* at the top and the *Sudras* at the bottom. I remember how amused I

felt when a few years ago a Brahmin lawyer, notorious for his bad character, spoke to me in a pompous style: "You know we Brahmins are a superior people". There are indeed good Brahmins of whom any community can be proud, but so are there good people in every caste, but they do not get recognised as being as good as any good Brahmins. A great *Vaishya* like Gandhiji was none the less a good Brahmin as any that India has produced in her long history. He may even claim to have been a far greater *Brahmin* than any that India has produced in spite of the fact that he did not disdain to be a good weaver like any *Sudra* weaver or to be a good sweeper as any that the *Panchamas* could boast of. He understood what most Indians have failed to understand the tragic cry of the untouchable in a novel of Mulk Raj Anand "I am looked upon as unclean because I keep others clean." It will be good for India if every Indian seriously takes to heart the following thought from John W. Gardiner's book on *Excellence*:

"An excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable than an incompetent philosopher. The society which scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water."

Caste in the days of its Vedic origin and even in the days of Dharma Sastras may have had some good points to have justified its existence in those days, but its subsequent rigidity in its taboos against inter-dining and inter-marriage and crossing the seas has left India behind in the race of life. It has hindered racial mixture and retarded the growth of nationalism. It has led to



economic stagnation. It has made every non-Hindu community caste-conscious, e.g. the Parsees, the Muslim sects of Khojas and Bohras and Cutchi Memons, the British in their exclusive clubs. The Indian Christians in South India still go as *Brahmin Christians* and *Sudra Christians*.

Caste apart from its justifiable economic aspect has rendered one great service to India: it has preserved the fabric of Hinduism in however distorted a form it be and has resisted the militant impact of Islam or the subtly persuasive call of Christianity. Now that India is free and independent the time has come for her to forge a new bond of nationalism to start her career as one nation.

Caste has resisted every attempt at reform. The call of nationalism is the greatest challenge it has had to meet. Communal and caste voting at elections raises a doubt whether caste may not overcome the call of nationalism as in ages past it withstood the call of her greatest sons from Buddha downwards right down till the times of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Gandhiji. One can but hope. What would life be without hope?

## 5

### THE CONTRAST OF EUROPEAN AND INDIAN HISTORY

WE HAVE SEEN that the history of Europe since the days of ancient Greece and Rome has been the history of the State in varied forms in varied countries of Europe and America. The history of India goes to show the comparative insignificance of the state in the life of the people. Caste has been the stronghold of India and Indians have bowed low before successive invaders only to continue their life within the four walls of their caste. We have already covered this aspect. There is another institution which has contributed to the sustenance of Hinduism and that is the Hindu joint family. I have always looked upon this as the most outstanding monument of Hindu social genius. Together with caste it has withstood the autocracy of the State. Neither the Muslims nor the British had the courage to tinker with these social institutions. But independent India with a new national outlook has had the courage to legislate about marriage and adoption and succession. Dr. Ambedkar had the genius to work out the details with the full support of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. With his English education and Marxist economics and with the enormous popularity he enjoyed with the masses he had no inhibitions. His word was enough and people were willing to follow his lead even when they did not understand where he was leading them to. Caste has not been



frontally attacked, though the implications of our Constitution go definitely against it. No state, however absolute its authority, can compel a man to marry outside his caste, still less an untouchable. No state can compel a man to worship in a temple which he considers polluted by the entry of the untouchables. It can only permit people to break all the rules of caste without having to face social obloquy or ostracism. With the Hindu joint family it has been different, but to understand its present battered condition one has to understand what the Hindu joint family stood for.

In other systems of law as in Western countries and in Islamic countries a family comprises a husband, wife and children. The interests of dependents like parents may be protected as in Islam. But the right of property vests in man or woman as the case may be. It is only after the death of the owner that the rights of the children and wife or husband come into operation, subject of course to the absolute right of making a will as in Christian countries or a limited right as in Islam.

The Hindu joint family covers at least three generations consisting of all male members as its main partners, coparceners as they are technically called. As soon as a male child is born he automatically becomes an equal partner. Even the male child in the womb of the mother has his rights. The eldest male member is the head of the family. He is autocratic, but very benevolently so. The women in the family have no proprietary rights in the family property, but they have the right to be maintained: all their marriage expenses had to come out of the family property. Each daughter of the family had to be given *stridhanam* whether in cash or jewellery or property. She had absolute right to it which even her husband cannot encroach upon. This was in theory, but in actual practice a good Hindu wife would not grudge

coming to her husband's assistance in times of stress, and at times she could be even bullied into surrendering her *stridhanam* wholly or in part. Naturally the amount of the *stridhanam* varied according to the wealth and the status of the family. Once a girl is married she has no further claim to her paternal property for she then belongs to another family. All this has been radically changed by legislation after Independence.

The Hindu Joint Family as originally conceived had certain distinct advantages:

1. It prevented an undue fragmentation of property and led to the preservation of family property as one unit.
2. It afforded protection in troublous times.
3. It conserved skill and learning in a family.
4. A handicapped child was looked after and thus we had a form of social insurance.

On the other hand it did badly hit women generally especially where a father had only a daughter or daughters, but the ancestral property had to pass on to the nephews and cousins, while the daughters of his own loins had to go to the wall. The position to-day has swung to the other extreme. Testamentary powers have been given to all Hindus whereby daughters can be beneficiaries. In case a Hindu dies intestate, the rights of the females are protected. The joint family law has been seriously affected, as a female's right to a share in the joint property has been recognised. She cannot demand partition but she has been allowed a right to live in the ancestral house. This is a serious matter as the old character of the family property is affected if the husband belonging to another family is given the right to come and stay with his wife's family. The law of



adoption allows now a female to be adopted, although the whole religious basis for adoption rests on a son's inherent right to perform certain religious ceremonies for the ancestors.

The joint Hindu family at its best in the ancient days might not have been free from defects, but on the whole it was very logically planned and tended to develop a strong family feeling which has worked as strongly as the caste system itself. Even though a daughter had no share in the family property she was generally treated generously at the time of the marriage whether in the form of *stridhanam* or of dowry. In times of stress the brothers did not hesitate to come to the rescue of their sisters. But the spirit of western individualism which has come with the British has made the old system somewhat anachronistic. It worked well when women were married as infants and they were ignorant too. But to-day women are educated and fully alive to the sense of their rights. They are not in a mood to take the whims of their husbands or of their mothers-in-law at their face value. Family bickerings have become far more frequent than formerly. The family spirit has decayed and made the working of the old family system difficult, if not impossible. Over thirty years ago the Chandrasekhara Iyer Committee appointed by the then Government of Mysore to report on the status and rights of Hindu women had come to the conclusion that the decay of the joint family had set in, a phenomenon which in their opinion "could neither be arrested nor need be regretted."

Thus we see that so far as Hindu civilisation is concerned the role of the State was severely restricted by the play of caste and joint family. Along with British conquest and English education have come the idea of freedom and self-government and democracy. In 1947

the British quit and India became free. A democratic constitution has been brought into operation and the State to-day is far more powerful than it ever was in the long history of India. We have seen in the earlier lectures how the Constitution of India has been modelled on the British and American models and how communistic ideas have also come in as socialism.

Gandhiji won freedom for India, but the India of to-day is the creation of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He was the most European of all the Indian leaders and he was so free from Hindu orthodoxy that he found no difficulty in trying to make India a replica of the West, though he was by no means unconscious of his Indian inheritance. This is made abundantly clear in his *Discovery of India* and also in his now famous Testament: "Though I have discarded much of past tradition and custom and am anxious that India should rid herself of all shackles that bind and constrain her and divide her people and suppress vast numbers of them, and prevent the free development of the body and the spirit; though I seek all this, yet I do not wish to cut myself off from the past completely. I am proud of that great inheritance that has been and is ours, and I am conscious that I too, like all of us, am a link in the unbroken chain, which goes back to the dawn of history in the immemorial past of India. That chain I would not break, for I treasure it and seek inspiration from it and as witness of this desire of mine and as my last homage to India's cultural inheritance I am making this request that a handful of my ashes be thrown into the Ganga at Allahabad to be carried to the great ocean that washes India's shore."

It has become impossible for India to stand still in this scientific and jet age. Nehru has placed India in the



moving stream of life, but he himself was not clear whither he was leading India to. The world to-day is divided between the two conflicting ideals of society: democracy based on freedom and communism based on security. The question is where India will be in the future.

## COMMUNISTIC SOCIETY

TILL THE eighteenth century the economic life of Europe as of the rest of the world was mainly agricultural. The Industrial Revolution towards the end of that century marked the beginning of a new era in the history of mankind. It introduced the machine age and led to a phenomenal development of industry. England was the pioneer in this respect. It brought into existence a new class: the capitalists who furnished the requisite capital to build factories and equip them with machinery. London grew as an industrial city and new industrial cities sprang into being like Manchester and Birmingham and Sheffield. The prospects of employment drew the rural population to cities and led to a concentration of labourers in these cities. The circumstances were so new that there was hardly any time for a considered development of industry. *Laissez faire* became the order of the day. The capitalists were out to make money and one way to do so was to keep down the cost of labour. Labour was inevitably exploited. The so-called classical economics that developed with Ricardo looked upon labour as a matter of demand and supply. The human aspect was lost sight of. An enlightened capitalist like Richard Owen tried to run his factory on a human basis, but in a blatantly competitive world he suffered losses and his scheme was laughed out of existence as utopian socialism. But the problem of labour-capital relation



remained and things grew from bad to worse. Labour was unorganised and was not able to be even with the moneyed strength of the capitalists backed up as they were by the government. Sooner or later labour had to organise and the trade union movement led to strikes and they were sought to be put down but ultimately they worked. The tussle between capital and labour became the normal feature of industrial life in England and elsewhere where similar conditions prevailed.

Englishmen by temperament are constitutional and they hammered out a solution of the problem in their own way. We shall speak of it later. But on the continent industrialism developed a markedly revolutionary phase culminating in *Das Kapital* of Karl Marx. He was no labourer, but a highly intellectual philosopher. Too much of a revolutionary, he had to leave his own country, Germany, and found a hospitable home in London. The Library of the British Museum afforded him facilities of which he took full advantage. He was poor, but he had the good fortune to have a rich collaborator in Engels. Marx called his socialism scientific and his solution of labour problem was heroic: a complete abolition of capitalists. He found an unconscious supporter in Locke, who had looked upon labour as the creator of value. If so, the full value should go to labour and the profits taken by the capitalists so far were just theft. This presentation of economics does not do justice to all the factors that go to the production of articles: raw material produced by agriculturists and landlords, capital furnished by capitalists, the managerial talent furnished by entrepreneurs. Labour certainly is an important factor entitled to a legitimate share of the profits but cannot claim to be the only party entitled to the profits. Capitalists can be eliminated, but not capital which in the absence of capitalists can come only from the State.

The process of eliminating capitalists implies a bitter class war, and implies their expropriation. This can be achieved only by the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. This will bring about the liquidation of all other classes apart from the capitalists, viz. landlords, big or small and all employers of labour. Marx was devoted to the idea of freedom and looked upon the dictatorship of the Proletariat as only a temporary phenomenon. He confidently spoke of the withering of the state. The very basis of Marx's scientific socialism is reared on intensive hatred. Maxim Gorky was imbued with this hatred, for he wrote: "The humanism of the proletariat requires an unquenchable hatred of petit bourgeoisdom, of the power of capitalists, and of their lackeys and parasites, of fascist henchmen and traitors of the labour class—a hatred of all that causes suffering, all that lives on the sorrow of hundreds of millions of men." The labour leaders of England by their very softness and moderation evoked the contempt of orthodox Marxists. Lenin wanted to support Henderson in the same way as a "rope supports one who is hanged." A communist like T. A. Jackson did not hesitate to say: "I would take them (non-communists) by the hand as a preliminary to taking them by the throat." This is typical of the communist war mentality and millions have died at their hands to make the world safe for the surviving communists. It is a strange paradox that the movement which aimed at the betterment of the suffering was yet so indifferent to the suffering they so willingly imposed on humanity at large.

Marx was so full of the industrial conflicts in industrially advanced countries like England that he was confident that a socialist revolution could well be expected to break out in such countries. But in spite of his long stay in England he had failed to understand the



psychology of English people and till to-day England has stood out as a bulwark against communism. Marx came to be accepted as a prophet by the Russian intellectuals in exile and destiny picked out Lenin as the instrument to introduce communism in Russia of all places, Russia which was only on the fringe of industrialism and was predominantly agricultural and religious. The political conditions in Russia were ripe for a revolution. The Czar had been already deposed and a weak government was in power. The Germans smuggled Lenin into Russia and like a human volcano as the leader of the Bolsheviks he took power into his hands and brought the first communist state into existence.

Lenin was ruthless against his enemies but he was a statesman of the highest order and had enough milk of human kindness to endear him to the masses that fell under his spell. Lenin abolished at one stroke of his pen religion which had been already condemned by Marx as the opiate of the people. There were not many industries to be nationalised but it was easy to nationalise all land and abolish landlordism. But the peasants, who loved their land were not interested in the economics of communism and preferred not to produce. This led to an acute famine and Lenin had to bow down for the time being and agreed to pay for the produce instead of confiscating it. The military genius of Trotsky helped to win the civil war. The United States of Soviet Republics had come to stay and make history. By 1924 when Lenin died Russia had become a power. The hope of Marx that the state would wither away has been completely falsified by Russian experience. Far from withering away the State has consolidated itself and has become as powerful and ruthless as any state can hope to be. Stalin succeeded in stepping into the shoes of Lenin. He proved to be utterly ruthless without that humanism

which existed in his predecessor or his successor. He built up the state machinery on the czarist model and after frequent purges liquidated one possible opponent after another. He succeeded in thoroughly industrialising Russia so that the growth of urban population rose from 26 millions in 1926 to 87 millions in 1956. After millions of non-communists had been killed, driven out as exiles or imprisoned, the Communist party has increased its membership phenomenally. The number of the members of the Communist party grew from 1,700,000 in 1928 to 33,000,000 in 1957 and to 44,700,000 in 1964. In half a century it has achieved results which can only be described as miraculous. Illiteracy has been wiped off. Scientific research has attained heights which have conquered even stellar spaces. Its health services are second to none. In industry she has beaten Britain and aspires to beat even U.S.A.

Communism in its ideals is one hundred per cent a revolt against Czarist Russia, but it is still redolent with the oppressive atmosphere of Czarist Russia. Its foreign policy is reminiscent of old Russia. Its espionage can teach something to old Russia which used to be the home of police activities in every detail. The spying of children on the parents and of brothers on brothers has ended in topsy-turvis. Maurice Hindus, a Russian by birth, an American by domicile, could speak of communist Russia only as Humanity Uprooted. Regimentation has attained heights which have left the country in the grip of fear. There is an interesting story for which Khrushchev himself is responsible. At a meeting Khrushchev was debunking Stalin. Somebody in the audience asked: "Why did you not say all this when Stalin was alive?" Khrushchev asked in return: Who said this? The speaker had not the courage to get up. Khrushchev smiled and said: That is the reason. An



Indian student who went to Russia in a delegation told me on his return: "I felt stifled in Russia. Only when I went to Paris after a month did I breathe freedom." It has been claimed by Russian communists that an emphasis on freedom is a characteristic of bourgeois society, for there can be no freedom for a hungry stomach. So they tend to emphasise rather equality. In the first flush of success they decreed complete equality among factory workers. There were no supervisors and all were paid equally. But it did not take long to discover that supervisors were necessary, if work had to be done efficiently. And they had to be paid more. No difference was made between skilled and unskilled workers. This worked as a premium for the unskilled, and so skilled workers had to be paid more than unskilled workers. Equality had to go in the interests of production. It has now come to be the paradox of communism that certain sections of Russian society are allowed high incomes, e.g. the officers that control the bureaucratic machine, scientists, authors and journalists. This has brought about a greater difference between the highest and the lowest earnings than even in the so-called capitalist countries like U.S.A. and U.K. The only difference is that all the earnings even at the highest level have to be spent in Russia and there is no possibility of multiplying capital as in capitalist countries for in Russia there are no private companies. The savings of the people can be invested only in buying government loans with a restricted amount of interest. It has to be noted that the level of wages paid to the Russian worker is markedly lower than in the capitalist countries.

The Communist crusade against religion in Russia has had an interesting history. Lenin abolished religion in Russia with a stroke of his pen. Religion was banned from all educational institutions, churches were closed,

the clergy were cowed down with brutal force or the more subtle force of ridicule. It seemed strange that religion appeared to disappear so rapidly from a country which had been profoundly religious through centuries. But Lenin succeeded only in making it go underground with unlimited possibilities of its revival in future. Lenin and Dostoevski were both Russians to the core. Dostoevski with his passionate hatred for all suffering was a rebel against all that Czarist Russia stood for. His imprisonment in Siberia was a natural sequel but that did not affect his convictions, still less his genius to portray the grim present and his vision of a new Russia and a new humanity. That explains why he has been looked upon by the Bolsheviks as a precursor, a prophet of new Russia. It is questionable whether he would have accepted the Bolshevik anti-religious teachings. He knew Russia as even Lenin did not. His great novel *The Brothers Karamazov* was much more than a novel. It was a study of the soul of Russia. The immortality of religion could not have had a better protagonist than Dostoevski. It was his pen that wrote:

“The Russian people live entirely in orthodoxy and in the idea of it. Outside orthodoxy there is nothing in them; they have nothing and need nothing, for orthodoxy is everything; it is the Church and the Church is the crown of the edifice, and that to all eternity. . . . No one who does not understand orthodoxy will ever understand the Russian people. Nay more, he can never even love the Russian people; at the best he will love an imaginary people, such as he desires to see in the Russian. And, on the other hand, the people will never recognise such a man as one of themselves: If you love not that which I love, believe not that which I believe and honour not that



which is sacred to me, you are not my brother. . . . The people will listen quietly to the man who wants to see them other than they are, if he is clever and a good speaker; they will even thank him for the advice and the knowledge he brings them; they may even follow much of his advice, for they are magnanimous and can make distinctions. But they will never regard him as their equal, never give him their hand or their heart."

A passage like this is worth quoting at length, as Rene Fulop Miller did in his classic *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* within ten years after the Russian Revolution. It was indeed prophetic on the part of this German historian and biographer that he wrote: "The wholly unsuccessful educational system of the Bolsheviks may one day recoil on itself, for this materialistically drilled, younger generation will later produce the most reactionary partisans of Orthodoxy."

It was easy to cut off the heads of the Czar and his family. It was not so easy to root out a way of life which had been fashioned through long centuries. It was inevitable that the religious convictions continued to live on in the hearts of the people. This came out twenty years later when the invasion of Russia by the hordes of Hitler roused the patriotism of all Russians, whether Bolsheviks or not. When these hordes were driven out, the religious-minded wanted to offer their thanks to God in an open mass. Stalin must have found himself in a fix, for if he accepted the request he would break a basic principle of the new communist way of life. If he refused, he would be guilty of rank ingratitude, a poor return for the valour of priests and their flocks in spite of the fact that they had suffered so much of persecution for twenty years and more. Stalin, in spite of his

iron heart yielded, an expression of a latent humanism and even religion that he had so successfully smothered in his heart. After this an open persecution of religion was an impossibility and it became possible for Kruschev to boast that there is full religious toleration in Russia.

Genuine literature is an expression of life. This is to be abundantly found in Pasternack's great novel: *Dr. Zhivago*. Purporting to give an account of the early years of Bolshevik assumption of power with its persecution of religion, it ventures to bring out the religious background of Russia of those days. No wonder it could not be published in Russia and the world came to know of it in its foreign garb of English and French and Italian, and was immediately acclaimed as a masterpiece, which duly got the imprimatur of a Nobel Prize. It is redolent of religion, though clandestinely practised. It is certainly a mark of Russian tolerance that he has been allowed to live, though he was not allowed to accept the Nobel Prize.

In recent years the practice of religion has penetrated the ranks even of Russian soldiers and Russian papers have not been slow to point to its dangerous potentiality from the standpoint of communist orthodoxy. What is most interesting is a growing revolt against anti-religious policies of orthodox communism. A writer in *The Times* (London) draws attention to a long article in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, in which it is argued that the closure of churches in Russia has only strengthened the attraction of religion and bred antagonism among the people. The article deplores the "purely negative type of atheism." The Italian communist leader, Signor Palmira Togliatti, is in open revolt against the anti-religious policies of communism, if not in the interests of religion, at least in the interests of communism itself. Communism has come to be a religion by itself with its



emphasis on humanism and has even developed a ritual of its own round the embalmed body of Lenin. But this is not enough and there are communists who ask: "Why cannot we replace the old ritual with a new one in this epoch when we are transforming the old world into the new and putting a new social order in place of the old?"

One might have expected that religion would die a natural death in Russia with its system of education which has set children against their parents and the State has taken the full responsibility of educating the younger generation. The conquest over illiteracy will stand as an immortal achievement of Bolshevik government. But the system of education generally in Russia has been vitiated by the fact that its aim is not to produce free citizens, but a body of ardent communists, who can pass on their own enthusiasm to others in geometric proportion. Lenin was a genuine lover of children. There was no politics about it. Charles II could cynically say that he kissed the children for their mothers' sake. Lenin's heart went out spontaneously to them. He allowed himself to be snow-balled by children and he felt all the better for it.

Children in Russia are certainly looked after as well as possible in an impersonal state. They have good schools, 15 million roubles are spent on their sports, they have holiday camps at beautiful centres like Artek, they have the Moscow Palace of Young Pioneers. It is meant for all aged 7 to 18 who wish to spend their leisure in interesting and useful ways. It has a stadium, a conservatory, a swimming pool, and an assembly square. It functions as an international friendship club and the friends are scattered in all the continents. There is a small exhibition to house presents received from friends abroad. Tropical plants are grown even in winter. Languages, including Hindi, are studied. The Engineer-

ing Section with astronomy and aeronautics is particularly popular, for an average Russian is air-minded and has ambitions to conquer space. There are special newspapers and magazines for children. There is a children's Publishing House and books galore are published for their benefit.

While all this is to the credit side of children's education in Soviet Russia, it has been rigidly controlled and Soviet ideology has been drilled into the minds of children. One may expect that by the time they grow up into adulthood they will have grown into perfect communists. Even assuming that the grown-ups of 1917 and after could not be easily divested of their ideas, the children of that decade now grown to manhood should be hundred per cent communists. Many of them must be so, but the very revival of religion shows that religion is too deep-rooted in human minds and hearts even in Russia and that is why it has triumphed over the orthodox Marxist-Leninism. In fact there is hardly any sphere of life in which communist ideology has not had to be modified to make it workable.

Similarly in the economic field the very word *profit* stank in the nostrils of early Bolsheviks. To-day Prime Minister Kosygin is driven to tell the Supreme Soviet that the recognition of the importance of profits was "essential to the speedy advance of the Soviet economy." The old principle of "to each according to his needs, from each according to his capacity" has lost its old dogmatic fervour. Men cannot be turned into self-sacrificing saints overnight. Men still tend to work to their own advantage. Any revolt against human nature always ends in defeat and frustration.

With the advance of education the reading public must show a colossal increase. The total annual circulation of newspapers (central, republican and local) runs into



18,300 million copies. The daily and weekly circulation exceeds 84 million copies, which is nearly a third of all the newspapers printed in the world. Magazines have an annual circulation of 1000 million. The press has played a great part in educating the masses into communist ideology. It is notorious that the press knows no freedom and that in open defiance of Marx's own teaching.

"The censored Press, a bad Press, remains bad, even when giving good products. A free Press remains good, even when giving bad products. A eunuch will always be an incomplete man, even if he has got a good voice. Nature remains good, even when giving birth to monsters. The characteristic of the censored Press is that it is a flabby caricature without liberty, a civilised monster, a horror, even though sprinkled with rose water. The government hears only its own voice and demands from the people that that they share the same illusion."

Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish communist heroine and an honoured name in the whole communist world, is equally outspoken in defence of the free Press.

"Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one Party—however numerous they may be—is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical concept of 'justice' but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and its effectiveness vanishes when 'freedom' becomes a special privilege."

Trotsky, the military genius that saved Bolshevism in its struggle against its enemies, whether Russians or others, foresaw the danger that the dictatorship of the proletariat would become the dictatorship of the Party, which in its turn would become the dictatorship of the Central Committee which again in its turn would become the dictatorship of one man. This was fully proved when Stalin gathered all power in his hands by resorting to frequent purges, of which Trotsky himself was the earliest victim.

All the Russian papers are practically government-controlled so that nothing is published which would go against the Government's policies. They constitute a pathetic example of His Master's Voice. Not a word could be breathed against Stalin so long as he was alive. But when Khrushchev started debunking Stalin the papers followed suit. Khrushchev played his role for a few years and monopolised the head lines, but with his fall came a total silence about him. The Press in Russia has indeed become a caricature of freedom. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

The Iron Curtain has come to be an expressive phrase to describe what Russia is or rather Russia that prefers to remain behind the purdah and is willing to be known only through its puppet press. But in spite of our ignorance of what is really happening in Russia it is not possible to deny that Russia is truly great in her achievements even though these at times be inconsistent with orthodox principles of Marxism. Russia is great, as the Czars were great in their time. It is curious how communist Russia follows in the foot-steps of the government they have so violently overthrown. The old police with its espionage is there now as ever before. The might of the Russian army and navy has, if anything, increased.



The old incentives of foreign policy are still there: the command of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. The glitter and pomp of Russian ballets is still maintained. The old masters of Russian literature like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky and Gogol are still cherished. Perhaps Shakespeare is read more in Russia than in any other part of the world. The Government is all powerful and may be said to be free. But is Russia free in spite of her military might and mastery over heavy industries?

It is time to have a look, however brief, at the other powerful communist country, China. Starting as a satellite of Russia, she has come to be a rival of Russia and presents disconcerting problems for a world that is yearning for peace. Maotse Tung is the Lenin of China, seeking his inspiration from Karl Marx. He is still at the stage of early Russian Bolshevism dreaming of conquering the world. Russia has been sobered and is prepared to accept co-existence, though without relaxing her efforts to build up pockets of communists in every free country. China is militant and is not hampered by any moral scruples. She is conscious of her enormous manpower and is prepared to let half its millions die if the other half can live as communists. She has made short shrift of Confucianism as Russia did with the Greek Church. She aims at dominating the whole of Asia and does not hesitate to exploit to the full Asiatic suspicion of Western Imperialism and Colonialism. She has committed the same mistakes as the communist Russians. In pursuit of heavy industries they have neglected agriculture and food has become a great problem in China. The higher category of workers gets only 30 lbs. of cereals per head, while others get only 15 lbs. In the whole of 1961 citizens of Shanghai got meat only four or five times in small quantities. The Great Leap of

Mao was boosted a great deal but ended only in failure evoking a quotation from a poet: "O Commune, everything I own is yours, except my tooth-brush."

In a burst of generosity Mao announced: "Let a hundred flowers bloom. Let a hundred schools contend." But within six weeks he met such a deluge of complaints and criticism that he thought it better to withdraw his decree and to revert to his old cynical view that the masses are just "a blank sheet of paper on which the leader may write what he wills." He banked a good deal on the success of his communes, but like Russia he has had to bow to the profit motive of the peasants. They were allowed to own private plots of land. Force tells, but only so long as the masses are willing to obey. A time usually comes when even the worm turns and the mighty government has to yield.

In spite of all the compromises it has had to make, on the whole the communist philosophy seems to have paid dividends. It has been able to establish itself very firmly. At the end of the Second World War Russia emerged as the second greatest power in the world and is in a position to cross swords with U.S.A. Communism has its charms. It cannot claim to be absolutely humanistic, as it is ruthless in dealing with all opponents but it holds out a promise of a new world of equality and security to all who accept its philosophy. As Einstein shrewdly said its appeal lies to hungry masses. It has succeeded marvellously in two comparatively backward countries of the world and succeeded in setting up satellite states. Russia has industrialised herself and China bids fair to do so. But they have not achieved success on the agricultural front and they have to import food from non-communistic countries. The most flourishing countries in the world to-day are still non-communistic: U.S.A.,



U.K., France, West Germany in Europe and Japan in Asia. Evidently Karl Marx still continues wrong inasmuch as the most industrial countries are not enamoured of Communism. Why? We shall proceed to answer this question.

## WESTERN SOCIETY TO-DAY

KARL MARX did not win converts in England and America during his life time or after his death, but he did set people thinking. England of the 19th century was seething with discontent. Although the capitalists were well entrenched behind the *Laissez Faire* policy of classical economists and they had powerful supporters in the Parliament, there were Englishmen, wise and human, who felt there was something wrong in the state of Denmark and were out to befriend labour as the under-dogs in British economy. Englishmen may be slow in taking up ideas and even more slow in following them up, but they have their own methods of solving problems. Apart from Richard Owen who failed so dismally in his own generation, the last decades of the nineteenth century saw in England a galaxy of brilliant individuals like George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Graham Wallas and others interested in socialism. Characteristically they founded the Fabian Society and adopted the tactics of Fabius Cunctator. They espoused the cause of labourers and together with the strength of labour votes succeeded in backing all measures that led to the betterment of working classes. They founded the Labour Party and had their first victory in having Keir Hardie elected as an M.P. This was the first dent in the aristocratic composition of the House of Commons, not to mention the House of Lords. It was a characteris-



tically English revolution when Keir Hardie insisted on discarding the traditional frock coat and silk hat and entering the House of Commons in the dress of a labourer. In the meantime the Liberal party had been impregnated with socialistic ideas and the dynamic personality of Lloyd George carried through his socialistic budget with its high income tax and death duties with the avowed object of taking from the rich to spend on the poor. The Labour Party grew rapidly so that in 1924 it became possible for its leader, Ramsay Macdonald, to become the first Labour Prime Minister of England. This was an achievement of which both Socialism and England can well be proud. To-day England ranks as a first class Welfare State and labour enjoys all the benefits that communism can claim for them. The wages are high and a capitalist centre like Port Sunlight of Lever Bros. is a settlement that can vie with any to be found in Russia. The capitalists have learned the secret of success: pay better wages so that they can feed better, enjoy leisure with maximum hours of work fixed by law, enjoy amenities like libraries and reading rooms, theatres and cinemas and swimming pools. They are insured against unemployment. An interesting light is thrown on how the dole system works. It was published in the papers a few years ago. Jack Cooper, a coal miner, unemployed since May 1957 got £32.50 a week plus milk from government unemployment benefits. If he went to work he would make only £26.60 a week and no free milk. He was badgered by the National Assistance Board to get a job. "But why should I?" was his comment, "My family will suffer. I have a duty to my wife and seven children." No wonder English labourers are so indifferent to communism, which will give them less wages and no right to pick and choose their work. He would lose even the freedom to think for himself. Hu

Shih, a disillusioned Chinese communist put it graphically: "The individual is denied even his right to silence."

U.S.A. continued in the old capitalist tradition longer than U.K. but time was on the side of labour. As Lord Brougham said long ago: "Education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive; easy to govern, but impossible to enslave." Franklin Roosevelt saw the signs of the times and plumped in for his New Deal, which made for contented labour. He had the co-operation of capitalists like Henry Ford, who knew how by paying more he could get more work out of his employees. To-day the American worker is the highest paid in the world. An American journal reported that in 1964 the average factory worker earned approximately \$100 or Rs. 475 a week. This was more than double the wage paid to a similar worker in 1948. It is further stated that notwithstanding an increase in prices the 1964 wages bought fifty per cent more than the 1948 wages. John Strachey in his *Challenge to Democracy* points out that in U.S.A. labour's share was 71 per cent in 1919 and 80.1 per cent in 1953. According to Prof. Galbraith, the famous author of *Affluent Society*, in 1928 the highest income group got 19 per cent. In 1946 it came down to 8 per cent. Between 1941 and 1950 the lowest fifth had a 42% increase in income, the second lowest fifth had an increase of 37%. The facts speak for themselves and one can see how unreal the communist abuse of the capitalists is. No wonder labour in all the so-called capitalist countries stands solidly behind the capitalist, for they enjoy comforts and luxuries beyond the dreams of wage earners in communist countries. The communists have still to learn that capitalism of to-day is something entirely different from the capitalism of the early nineteenth century. Labour is no more



an exploited section of society even in capitalist countries. They are fully conscious of their rights and are prepared to fight for them with all the means they can legitimately command. They certainly do not want to expropriate their employers, for they know that they can be replaced only by the tyranny of the State which is a stranger to all canons of freedom and will not tolerate strikes or even audible complaints.

To-day U.S.A. is the wealthiest country in the world. They have achieved a standard of life beyond the dreams of man a hundred years ago. Gadgets have reduced the drudgery of work at home and leave the busiest housewife ample leisure to be employed in some office or factory, enough leisure to see dramas and cinemas, to enjoy music of the highest type, to go on long drives, for in U.S.A. there is one car for every three citizens.

Behind all this prosperity is a way of life, a philosophy of life, it revolves round the concept of freedom. Britain had held aloft the banner of freedom. She did not hesitate to execute Charles I and to drive away James II from the throne of England. Thus was achieved the English Revolution and representative democracy was born in the name of freedom. The example was bound to be followed, though it took nearly a century for the American colonies of Britain to declare their independence under the name of United States of America and to-day they figure as the chief bulwark of democracy. In the galaxy of its Presidents there are some names of undying fame: Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Roosevelt and Kennedy. All of them were champions of freedom. Lincoln perhaps has figured most as the philosopher of American democracy and his life has been an inspiration for the last hundred years all over the world. Unlettered though he was without any formal schooling, by his genius he rose to

be a master of English language and few statesmen are quoted so frequently or so profusely as Lincoln. Here are a few samples for all who believe in freedom:

✓ “Each man should do precisely as he pleases with all which is exclusively his own.” This is the basis of democratic freedom. “This government cannot endure, half slave and half free.” This was the inspiration behind the Civil War which had as its twin aims: the preservation of national unity and the abolition of slavery as inconsistent with democracy.

“As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master.”

“Give to him that is needy is the Christian rule of charity but take from him that is needy is the rule of slavery.”

“Wolves devour lambs not because it is good for their own greedy maws, but because it is good for the lambs.” This is a fine example of his humour and sarcasm, matched by his retort when people complained that General Grant was drinking too much, “name the brand so that I can give it to other generals.”

“Let us have faith that right makes might.”

His whole Gettysburg speech is the shortest and the finest piece of oratory that any language can boast of. The whole of it is carved in the Lincoln Memorial at Washington, the finest monument that I have ever seen. His definition of democracy has become history, as “the rule of the people, by the people, for the people.” This expresses the idea of democracy in a nutshell. It breathes the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and has become an axiom in the political world.

Woodrow Wilson, the hero of the first World War, may have died a disappointed and frustrated man, as his countrymen disowned *The League of Nations*, his great work which aimed at making the world safe for demo-



cracy. But he was the inspirer of the hero of the Second World War, Franklin Roosevelt who created The United Nations and gave to the world his message of four freedoms:

Freedom of speech and expression.

Freedom to worship God each in his own way everywhere in the world.

Freedom from want.

Freedom from fear.

He was a dying man in the hour of his triumph. He hoped that America and Russia in spite of their differing political creeds would always stand side by side and lead the world to freedom. It was a wishful hope and he could not see that it was only a matter of a few years when these two countries would be locked together in a cold war. This may prove a passing phase in the shifting sands of politics. The rise of China as a communist state could have been expected to give a fillip to communism, but China's unlimited ambition and barbarism have made her a rival of Russia and Russia and America seem to be coming closer together than could have been foreseen. While Russia makes a parade of her disbelief in God, U.S.A. has accepted as its motto: *In God We Trust*.

The latest great name in the list of American presidents is that of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. He made history in more ways than one. He was the youngest President and the first Roman Catholic to have adorned the office. In spite of the emancipation of the negroes by Abraham Lincoln a century ago they have suffered under various disabilities, which the critics and ill-wishers of U.S.A. have always pointed out as a mark of American imperialism or American hypocrisy. Kennedy

took it upon himself to make his country a real model of democracy. Luckily he had Chief Justice Warren at the head of the Supreme Court. By a series of judgments the Supreme Court upheld the rights of negroes to equal treatment in every sphere of life. Like Abraham Lincoln, Kennedy too fell a victim to an assassin's bullets but he has left behind him a record of work as a great upholder of freedom and equality and like Lincoln he now belongs to the ages. America in spite of her wealth and power has her own problems to solve and he had mournfully to admit to Pandit Nehru that their two countries were difficult to govern.

The earliest immigrants had among them a batch of Puritans who gave to the new colony a stamp of high moral ideals which lingered on to the nineteenth century. But wealth to-day has brought with it its own evils. The two World Wars have brought U.S.A. to the zenith of its political and economic glory, but not without sorely affecting the whole moral fabric of American society. When American soldiers in their millions went to Europe to fight, their places as workers had to be taken up by women. This kept up production and helped women to win their economic freedom, but it also created situations where chastity and matrimonial fidelity lost their meaning. Soldiers on leave returning as war heroes were sex-hungry and they made demands which were willingly met as a reward for service to the country. Habits formed during war time could not be given up with the return of peace. Women did not fail to make the best use of their new-found opportunities. Shortage of cloth made for new fashions with skirts growing shorter and shorter and sleeves practically disappeared. Glamour girls made themselves irresistible and ideas of morality have undergone a cataclysmic change. This perhaps necessitated a new type of research and Kinsey's



Reports on the sexual behaviour of Americans did not come as a surprise, for it only confirmed what was widely known. Further research on the subject has been carried out by Psychoanalytical Assistance Foundation's Survey of the Sexual Habits of American Housewives. It is based on thousands of case histories. It is available in a paper back with shocking details. A few statistics will reveal the extensiveness of the changes in moral habits. "Many wives who, a year or two before, would have dissolved into hysterical tears if any man other than their husbands attempted to kiss them, now embarked eagerly on extramarital adventures." The number of illegitimate children born in 1918 had increased tenfold over the number in 1916. In 1890 there was one divorce for every 18 marriages in U.S.A. By 1920 there was one divorce for every 7.5 marriages. By 1930 the ratio had increased to one divorce for every five marriages. By 1957 there was one divorce for every 3.5 marriages. This implies a deplorable decay in marital responsibility.

What is true of America is true of Britain and other continental countries, but perhaps America holds the palm.

America has been acutely struck by the problems of the teenagers. This is surprising as all the needs of the teenagers have been met on a generous scale. But it is not difficult to connect this phenomenon with the decay in responsible family life. Children miss the warm love of their parents which was the rule in the pre-war years. Additional income of an earning wife is not an adequate compensation for the loss suffered in human qualities by tender children. Baby-sitters have come to be an institution, while the mothers attend parties or go to cinemas and theatres. Prostitution in most refined but shameless forms has increased while moral reformers have been doing their best to see the profession abolished. History

shows that legislation is the least effective way of dealing with social evils, whether prostitution or drinking or gambling. It is claimed by Russia that prostitution has been really abolished. There is reason to believe this to be true for the class of idle rich has gone out of existence. There are people who earn enough to be able to waste their money, but as a rule they are too earnest and too devoted to their scientific or literary work to slip into flippancy. There is no reason to believe that all Russians are saints. They cannot escape the play of usual human weaknesses but vice does not flaunt itself in Moscow or Leningrad, as it does in New York or London, or Paris or Berlin or Tokyo.

Another weakness of U.S.A. as of all capitalist countries is the number of the unemployed, which is staggering and colossal. In a Note prepared by the Lok Sabha Secretariat in 1965 it is stated that 5.6 per cent of the work force are unemployed. One does not expect to hear of poverty in the richest country in the world. A casual tourist hardly sees any sign of it unless he goes out of his way and pokes his nose into slum areas. But even these slums are affluent compared to the slums we are accustomed to in India. Poverty is relative. A family unit of four persons whose annual income from all sources is less than \$3,000 has been officially declared as poor. During 1963 there were 9.3 million families comprising over 35 million individuals with incomes below this figure and thus coming within the category of the poor. Of these 5.4 million families had incomes of less than \$2,000. A median family income stands at \$5,956 a year. Even so 430,000 men, women and children are reported to live on relief in New York city alone. In the whole of U.S.A. nearly 8 million people are said to be receiving relief, which means \$400 million a month. These are sad figures indeed, relieved only by the fact that the



U.S.A. government is out to battle against this poverty. President Kennedy started it in right earnest and President Johnson is continuing it. \$1.5 billion may figure in the next budget to carry on this war on poverty. The highest earnings of a labourer in U.S.A. come to \$3,278 a year and the lowest are \$1,504 a year. These figures are perhaps the highest in the world to-day.

The Communists by owning all means of production are bound to find employment for every one and so the question of unemployment does not arise. But the level of wages is markedly low—300 roubles in the urban areas and 270 in the rural areas. So there is security and this is the trump card in communist economics. To each according to his needs but he has no right to say what work should be assigned to him. He has just to obey and work in a vast machine where within limits he may have some voting rights in the management. But the naked fact is he is not free. He may refuse to work and that is his freedom, but he will lose his right to food. So he has only one freedom: the freedom to starve.

But for this one phantom of unemployment the U.S.A. is supreme in the world to-day in every respect, may be with Russia coming close to rub shoulders with U.S.A. In literary output U.S.A. is far in advance, as the writers are free to cover the world from A to Z, whereas the Russian writers are expected to sing only the glories of communism. Even a genius like Pasternack goes unrecognised as he refuses to toe the line of the powers that be. The same applies to music and painting and arts generally. But let it be said to the credit of Russians that they are not prevented from enjoying the best classics of the world whether it be Shakespeare and the whole range of English literature or classics from far-off

India and China. Lord Bowden in his broadcast talk on *A Trip to Russia* points out how in Britain only five out of a hundred young men go to universities. In Russia they send about 30 and U.S.A. "perhaps 35 or 40 out of 100."

To-day the world is divided into two rival blocks: Communist countries covering Russia and China, S.E. Asia and Eastern Europe, and the Democratic or Free countries covering U.S.A., U.K., Canada, Australia, West Germany, Japan. The rest of the world is perplexed as to which side to plumb for. In this category come India and the developing countries of Africa and South America. It is so difficult to choose, for each side has so many good points in its favour. In the last resort the choice boils down to freedom versus security. Modern democracies, highly industrialised, stand up for freedom but fail to give complete security of employment. Communist countries make light of freedom, for they know that an average man is more keen about his food than about freedom. But the choice is not so simple, for the whole history of humanity goes to show that humanity at its best rebels against all shackles and wants to be free and adventurous. We all admire men as heroes who have hewn out new pathways to progress even if it has meant persecution and loss of life. Absolute security may produce a stratified society as the Hindu caste system. Communism to-day is alive because it has yet to establish itself against the so-called capitalist societies. If it succeeds in achieving victory, they may sink into hibernating static societies with an absolute government planning their lives from birth to death.

The choice is indeed hard to make. Security is so essential. For its sake we willingly sacrifice a goodly portion of our freedom. Yet freedom too is very preci-



ous. In fact it constitutes the very breath of life. It is the incentive to progress and is wedded to divine discontent. History makes it clear that we cannot have both in equal proportions. It is possible to have a modicum of freedom with a requisite amount of security. Communism talks of freedom but only in an abstract way. It is based on force and promises bread to every hungry mouth and gives it too, provided every man obeys every decree of the government as to where he should work and what he should do, nor can he question as to how much he should be paid or what housing accommodation he should get. Free democracies on the other hand do not give absolute security in employment, but aspire to make up for this insecurity by means of doles during periods of unemployment. Education and health services are almost equally good in both countries. It may be that everything is terribly costly in U.S.A. and many services are free in Russia, but then the incomes in U.S.A. are far higher and people can afford to pay more for what they want, while the needs of those who cannot afford to pay are not neglected. Chester Bowles in his lectures at the University of Delhi on *The Makings of a Just Society* does not gloss over possible excesses in private management and is conscious of these dangers in a developing country like India, but courageously says: "The task of a developing nation, therefore, is not to forego the creative aspects of private enterprise for fear of its excesses but rather to find the means to discourage those excesses without discouraging responsible initiative". He speaks of a Just Society. A Russian pamphlet speaks of a New Society. Communism is indeed new and can succeed only if human nature can be changed overnight. Men work, but not without an eye on what they can get out of it, nor have they become lovers of humanity overnight.

Russia is as nationalist and imperialist as the Czarist Russia. Communist China shows her love for humanity by swallowing up countries as if they were no more than vegetables or sheep. No government can change human nature, but human nature can guide governments as to the limits within which they can mould society.



## 8

### THE CHOICE BEFORE INDIA

WITH THE EMERGENCE of India as an independent country in 1947 a new force in world politics came in. It hastened the independence of all countries, whether in Asia or Africa, and broke up the greatest empire that the world had even seen. India was free to continue in the British tradition of government. She was equally free to follow in the foot-steps of Russia. No wonder she was wooed by both camps. John Strachey in his thought-provoking essay on *The Great Awakening* wrote: "India, I am convinced, is the decisive country in the world to-day."

Before we pass on to the choice of India between the two conflicting ideologies we may as well linger for a short while on the third alternative which was open to India. This is the Gandhian way of life, which has very little in common with either of the two Western blocks. Gandhiji was a lover of freedom and was totally against the gigantic all-powerful states of the West. Nor was he enamoured of the vast cities which have cropped up as the off-shoots of Industrial Revolution. His main interest lay in the villages of India. He looked forward to their rehabilitation with a nostalgic yearning for the self-sufficient self-governing villages of ancient India. "My idea of village *swaraj* is that of a complete republic independent of its neighbours for its vital wants and yet interdependent in many others in which dependence is a

necessity; thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for its adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it would grow useful money crops but excluding ganja, tobacco, opium and the like." This is primitive economics with a vengeance and it is no wonder, if his own heir and other colleagues in the political battle against the British went their own way and were anxious to build up an India, big and powerful, on the model of the West. Gandhiji as a political fighter showed remarkable shrewdness, but his colleagues were alive to the demands of the twentieth century with its machinery, complex industrial organisation and a live political climate. They were aware that if the British quit India there would be others only too willing to take their place. So India per force had to by-pass Gandhian ideology. He was not the first leader to be discarded in the hour of triumph as the case of Winston Churchill shows. Some of his pet ideas have been accepted, as for example prohibition, hardly to the advantage of her treasury or her morals. His extreme emphasis on *charka* had a polemical value against British imperialism, but it can hardly be expected to meet the needs of the teeming millions of India. Machines may have brought industrial unrest and introduced a drudgery one can easily be bored with. But it is impossible to set back the march of civilisation and India could hardly be expected to give up her right to industrial development in western terms. If Gandhiji was really earnest in all he said against industrialism, he could not have committed a greater mistake than nominating Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as his heir. He should have known that Nehru was a product of the West, wedded to western economics and western outlook on life.



Nehru did not find it possible to make an outright choice between the two rival ideologies of democracy and communism. As a child of Harrow and Cambridge he was wedded to western democracy and the zest for freedom was as great in him as in any Englishman. Fortunately or unfortunately he had read Karl Marx and found in him a new inspiration. After his visit to Russia he was enamoured of communist economics and was greatly attracted by her Five Year Plans. The result was that in economics he stood for a mixed economy with a definite bias in favour of state ownership of heavy industries. In politics he thought it best to be non-aligned. It would take us far too long to evaluate the results of his policies. John Strachey is in raptures over India's achievements. He talks of the race between China and India as that between the hare and the tortoise and he thinks that the tortoise wins, he thinks that India can carry through her great community development work because she brings to her task great historic traditions. But Indians themselves are divided in their appraisal of India as she has emerged after independence.

Socialistic planning and private sector co-exist but the private sector lives under a Damocles' sword. There is a prejudice against capitalists that they are inefficient, not so honest as they should be and their profit motive militates against the poverty-stricken masses of India. But the Indian communists complain that capitalists pay so much to the funds of the Congress party that they are really allowed to flourish so that the rich become richer and the poor poorer. It is also the sad experience of India that the public sector is not paying dividends as they were expected to pay. In fact the paltry profits of the public sector compare badly with the profits of the private companies. The public sector concerns are run on a luxurious scale and since it is public money there

is no regard for economy or efficient running. There are of course exceptions. Planning has not come easy to India. There has been no experience behind it. Statistics are often non-existent, and where they exist they are incorrect or misleading. The result is that targets grandiosely set out are not reached. There are endless complaints about corruption in high quarters. And Government has been forced to appoint committees to study the problem while a Home Minister has promised to resign if he does not succeed in rooting out corruption in two years.

The result of planning and a wide-scale industrialisation has been heavy borrowing from U.S.A. and Britain and even other smaller countries of both blocks. But there has been heavy taxation undreamt of in the worst days of foreign rule. The small executive councils of the British days turned out far better and more efficient work than the large ministries of to-day. Parkinson's Law has begun to operate with perfection: more officers, less work turned out. India with her enthusiasm for communist planning has committed the same mistakes as Russia and China: undue emphasis on heavy industries at the expense of agriculture. India, an agricultural country par excellence, has been reduced to importing food grains at heavy cost. Student indiscipline, a hang-over from the days of non-co-operation, has been a disquieting feature of our university life, when we look to them as future citizens of India to take our country to undreamt of heights. Cost of living has been increasing so rapidly that increases in our *per capita* national income seem dwarfish and certainly do not add to the sense of happiness. That India has talents of a high order is proved abundantly by the fact that doctors and scientists willingly bid goodbye to India to settle down in foreign lands, especially U.S.A. and U.K. The drain of our



money in British days was bad enough. But the drain of brains to-day is infinitely worse. It is most disquieting that Indians outside India have developed a sense of nausea where things Indian are concerned. The worst example of this type, I hope not typical, is to be found in Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness*. He is a West Indian novelist, whose grandfather had emigrated to Trinidad from India. Out of patriotism or curiosity he came to India and returned to the land of his birth a disillusioned man. His impressions are not flattering to India, but if there is some truth in them, as in Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* of a generation ago, they can help to improve us by shaking off our self-complacency and our attitude of holier-than-thou, which makes us pose ourselves as the best in the world.

Naipaul likens India to "one vast latrine." He finds the Indian schizophrenic for he is the scientist who "has a tryst with his astrologer to fix an auspicious moment" before he joins a job. Caste "leads to callousness, inefficiency and a hopelessly divided country, division to weakness, and weakness to foreign rule." It makes India the "world's largest slum." "Yesterday the mimicry was Mogul and to-morrow, who knows, it may be American or Russian."

In India too there are a few Indians, comparatively few, who see no good in India. They are not in a position to do any harm as they have developed some patriotism and are willing to serve India as best they can. But there is a much larger section who are lost in our ancient glories and talk glibly and loudly about them. A foreign visitor towards the end of the last century is said to have remarked "Touch an Indian and he will vomit seventeen volumes of Herbert Spencer." This is a palpable exaggeration but it would be true to say: "Touch an educated Hindu and he will vomit tons of Upanishads

and the Gita." The tragedy of India is that we do not practise what we preach. While we are lost in our national heritage we miss the message of a world culture and a world view which Arnold Toynbee speaks of so eloquently:

"Our descendants are not going to be just westerners like ourselves. They are going to be the heirs of Confucius and Laotse as well as of Plato and Plotinus; of Gautama Buddha, as well as Deuter Isaiah and Jesus Christ; heirs of Zarathustra and Mohammad as well as Elijah and Elisha and Peter and Paul; heirs of Shankara and Ramanuja as well as Clement and Origen; heirs of Ibni Kalladum as well as Bousset and heirs of Gandhi and Lenin and Sun Yat Sen as well as Cromwell and George Washington and Mazzini."

Perhaps the greatest danger we are facing in India to-day is a loss of faith in spiritual values, blinded as we are by the triumphs of science. We proudly boast of secularism in our Constitution. We mean thereby tolerance of all religions without the State support of any one religion. But secularism exhales the communist distrust of religion as a source of all evil. The very word *secular* means "of or pertaining to the world, or things, not religious, sacred or spiritual; temporal." This is the dictionary meaning of the word and it speaks for itself. It would have been far better if the makers of our Constitution had allowed themselves, to be influenced by Schweitzer, for he is more akin to the soul of India than Karl Marx or Lenin. One of the greatest and tallest of men in any generation in any country, Schweitzer had the wisdom to say "Our generation, though so proud of its many achievements, no longer believes in the one



thing which is all essential: the spiritual advance of mankind."

India to-day even after eighteen years of Independence is still in the throes of a new birth. We are striving to build up a new India, a great India, but it can be great in an abiding fashion only if she is true to the spiritual foundations of her culture. We must be proud of our spiritual inheritance. We must be proud that she has been the home of great religions and offered asylum to Zoroastrians from Persia a thousand years ago as to Dalai Lama of Tibet in our generation. It is good that we quote profusely from our Scriptures. It would be better if we practise what we quote, for in this lies the test of our sincerity and our faith in India.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Educated at Bombay and Cambridge Universities in Philosophy, in Economics and Political Science at Oxford and in Law at Middle Temple, London, Professor A. R. Wadia has occupied high positions as Professor of Philosophy, Politics and Sociology in Mysore University from its inception. As Director of Public Instruction in Mysore, and Director of Education in Madhya Bharat, as first Pro-Vice-Chancellor in the University of Baroda and Director of The Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay, Secretary Inter-University Board, connected with various universities as member of the Syndicate, University commissions and committees he has had wide experience of education at all levels. He was the President of the All-India Federation of All-India Educational Associations, and of the Indian Philosophical Congress. At present he is a member of the University Grants Commission, and also a member of the Rajya Sabha.

He has to his credit a large number of books on Philosophy and Sociology.

In recognition of his work and worth H. H. The Maharaja of Mysore conferred on him the title of *Rajasevasakta* and the President of India has given him the award of *Padma Bhushan*.

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